Radical Periodicals In The United States 1890-1960

RADICAL PERIODICALS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1890-1960

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MARXIST QUARTERLY

Numbers 1-3

1937

With an Introduction by

MICHAEL HARRINGTON

Author of

The Other America and *Accidental Century*

GREENWOOD REPRINT CORPORATION
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Introduction

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Introduction

The editors of the *Marxist Quarterly* sought to create a journal of serious socialist thought which would be both scholarly and independent of any factional alignment on the non-Communist Left. They attracted some first-rate writers and intellectuals and published material of great merit (many of the articles are well worth being read for their intrinsic value and not just as historical data). And yet the *Quarterly* only lasted for three issues. 1937 was the year of the Moscow Trials, of the Spanish Revolution and the opening political skirmishes of World War II. The passions which these events evoked simply would not permit sustained collaboration on the Left on a non-party basis.

The Board of Editors was quite distinguished and, given the spectrum of the non-Communist Left in America, quite heterodox. Lewis Corey was the managing editor and did most of the actual editorial work. As Louis Fraina, he had played an important role in the early Communist movement. He had been charged with being a government agent and then with absconding with funds (in his brilliant history of American Communism, Theodore Draper essentially vindicates Fraina's reputation). Under the name of Lewis Corey he had, by 1937, achieved considerable recognition for his writings on the American economy and social structure. Louis Hacker was already well known as a historian in 1937, Sidney Hook and Meyer Schapiro were both scholars and Marxist activists, Sterling Spero had written on the black worker, and Bertram Wolfe was one of the intellectual leaders of the Lovestone faction (and later was to write *Three Who Made a Revolution*).

Two other intellectuals who were involved in the planning stages of the *Marxist Quarterly,* but who did not join the Board of Editors, are of particular note. As both Meyer Schapiro and Sidney Hook remember the *Quarterly's* genesis, Corliss Lamont was among the early supporters (and a contribution from him was published in the second issue). But, typical of the polarizations of the times, Lamont moved away from the *Marxist Quarterly* and toward *Science and Society,* a periodical which, though it then published articles by independent scholars of various views (and has done so much more in recent years) was within the broad Communist cultural orbit. And, Schapiro recounts, James Burnham also attended some of the first discussions of the project but withdrew on the grounds that the publication would be too politically diffuse (Burnham was a Trotskyist at the time).

As George Novack, one of the Trotskyists involved in the project, recounted his own experience in a 1968 article, Burnham and he quit the *Quarterly* because of the second of the Moscow Trials in 1937. The Lovestonites, who identified with Bukharin in Russia, supported the purge until their own idol was finally caught up in it. The Trotskyists were, of course, deeply involved in the Dewey Commission of Inquiry on the verdict against Trotsky and, Novack wrote, the *Marxist Quarterly* was simply unable to contain these different points of view. So the first issue was the occasion of the first split.

So political problems bedeviled this non-party journal from the very first. These at least partially account for the character of the magazine. Most of the articles are far removed from immediate politics or factional issues of the day. There are discussions of philosophy by Edel, Hook, Eliseo Vivas and others; historical narratives by Hacker, Phillip Slaner and Stuart Brown; and translations from Europeans like Franz Mehring and Karl Korsch.

Now it is certainly true that even in such seemingly "theoretical" realms there were passionate political divisions. Hook's discussion of Dialectic and Nature in the second issue is still cited in Soviet texts as an example of a fallacious American pragmatic approach to Marxism. And Meyer Schapiro's discussion with Bertram Wolfe in Number 3 is as concerned with the fate of the Mexican Revolution as with aesthetics. Yet, the *Marxist Quarterly* did not engage in the kind of immediate, topical content which would have inevitably caused a split on the editorial board.

But there was another, more idealistic reason for the intellectual style of the *Quarterly*. The men who gathered around this publication were serious, and original thinkers. By 1937, for instance, Sidney Hook had already made significant contributions to the

scholarly study of the origins and meaning of Marxism and Karl Korsch had a world-wide reputation among those concerned with Marxist philosophy. So there was a desire to found a magazine which would rise far above the level of factional journalism which then prevailed in the radical movement. In conception, then, the *Marxist Quarterly* was to be a sort of American *Neue Zeit.*

Yet, and this was the dominant factor in the magazine's demise, its environment was almost totally unlike that of the pre-World War I *Neue Zeit.* The German periodical was part of an ascendent, unified socialist movement which was confronting major issues in every advanced nation in the world. This, and the remarkable genius of its editors and contributors, made it one of the most vital publications in the history of socialism. The *Marxist Quarterly,* on the other hand, brought together brilliant spokesmen of various Marxist tendencies which, however well-wrought their resolutions and serious their analyses, had no mass following. And it did so in 1937 at the precise moment when events in Russia and Spain were turning debates over political differences on the Left into a literal matter of life and death. Thus, even though the intellectual resources available to the *Quarterly* were quite impressive, the project could not transcend the times.

In the end, there were non-political factors which influenced suspension of publication. The *Quarterly*'s format was too bulky and expensive for its finances; it could not compete with the radical parties and committees for money; and there were technical problems in distribution. As Sidney Hook remembers it, the *Quarterly* "petered out" and there was no climactic faction fight on the editorial board. At the same time, both Hook and Schapiro recognize the underlying problem of the political differences among the editors. The Lovestonites, Schapiro notes, were not simply hostile to the members of other organized tendencies but suspicious as well of the independents.

And so, in three short, but distingushed, issues the *Marxist Quarterly* came to an end. Its death was part of the tragedy of American radicalism in the thirties. The depression at home and the upheavals abroad had moved American intellectual life to the Left. The main beneficiaries of this shift were the Communists who, with their Stalinist view of the necessary subservience of thought to the party line, mainly promoted apologetics, frauds and mechanistic popularizations of Marx. The significant number of American writers who escaped from, or avoided, the Communist trap made some remarkable cultural contributions in magazines like the *Marxist Quarterly* and *Partisan Review.* But they were never really able to relate their brilliance to the political struggle of the millions and their energies were often dissipated in internal debates, theory and practice, which Marx had insisted must be one, were sundered.

Still in all, it is an achievement that, thirty years after its brief life, the *Marxist Quarterly* is still very much worth reading. Radicalism is part of the secret history of the United States. It has been inspired, tragic and comic, and some of its fantastic dreams, like industrial unionism, have actually come to pass. The Radical Periodicals will, of course, provide a mine of information to scholars but, more than that, they should help this country to know its hidden radical self. Without such a knowledge, I don't think we will be able to make the new departures, the daring innovations, which the times demand.

—Michael Harrington
New York, 1968

MARXIST QUARTERLY

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To Our Readers

THIS IS THE FIRST ISSUE of the *Marxist Quarterly,* offered to you for consideration and approval. We believe it is a good job. What do you think of it?

•

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE we shall add a department—Chronicles and Communications. It will include short articles on the progress of Marxism, especially in the university world, and controversial discussion of articles appearing in the *Quarterly*. Contributions are invited.

•

WE WANT CONTRIBUTORS; no one, neither the editors nor any of the contributors to this issue, has a monopoly of writing in our pages. One of our important objectives is to discover new writers and develop potential talent. There are four types of writers whom we should like to contribute:

1. Marxists who have already written on Marxism or are beginning to write.

2. Those who are using the general Marxist approach in the social sciences, without being identified as Marxists.

3. Specialists and research workers in particular fields, whose objective presentation of new or neglected material might be of utmost importance to the social sciences.

4. Opponents of Marxism who may wish to debate. Several debates are already being prepared for publication in the *Quarterly*.

Articles are desired on history, economics, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, political science, psychology, education, etc., on art, literature and culture generally, and on the larger aspects of the natural sciences.

•

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A magazine such as the *Marxist Quarterly*—limited in its financial resources, on which no one is paid for his work—must depend primarily upon its readers and friends for circulation. Readers must get readers, making a chain which is no stronger than its weakest link. In other words, the *Quarterly* is really a cooperative project, in which editors, contributors and readers must work together to insure success. We ask *your* cooperation.

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Challenge

BY THE EDITORS

THERE is widespread agreement that culture is in one of its decisive stages of transition. The transition is marked by increasingly acute social and intellectual conflicts, and by the growing conviction that only socialism can save the great achievements of modern culture—and the promise of still higher fulfillment—from destruction. Marxism is the theoretical expression of the struggle to realize socialism; its philosophy implies a faith in man's creative intelligence to build a rational civilization of plenty, peace, beauty and freedom.

The recent growth of interest in Marxism among intellectual circles can be regarded as one of the major phenomena in American culture today. It is evident as much in the increasing frequency of attacks upon Marxism as in the actual number of those who, especially in the colleges and universities, have taken the name as a mark of identification with the ideas of the greatest mass movement in history. The influence of the Russian Revolution, the subsequent development of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and the problems it creates, the world wide crisis that abates only to flare up anew, the rise of fascist reaction ideologically motivated by hostility to Marxism—have made Marxism a force that must be understood and mastered by all who are interested in progress.

Despite some brilliant achievements in amassing material and in suggestive analyses of particular problems, the recognized social sciences offer no integrating philosophy of interpretation and action. The specialization of disciplines to a point where all sense of connection is lost with the larger issues of the social world, the accumulation of technical instruments of precision accompanied by confusion concerning the purposes for which they should be used, the resurgence and multiplication of irrationalisms canonized into creeds—all these are reacting stultifyingly upon the social sciences and are making it increasingly impossible for them to guide social thought and action in the greatest cultural crisis of history.

Hence our challenge to the forces of disorder, bewilderment and reaction is primarily a challenge to the social sciences. We believe that it is possible to analyze scientifically the complex subject matter of society from a definite point of view without sacrificing the richness of the material considered, without ignoring difficulties, without bogging down in a mass of unrelated descriptive correlations which comprises so much of American

social science. We believe that an integrating conception of the social process as a whole can play a dynamic part in redirecting historical situations, and that it is the function of social science, alive to the responsibilities of knowledge to life, to build floodgates against the mounting tides of irrationalism and reaction and to help fashion the intellectual instruments for the struggle in behalf of a new social order. Admitting that no synthesis can grasp everything at once and that an uncritical synthesis is the open door to speculative excesses, we maintain that a failure to project a philosophy from which society as a whole may be surveyed ultimately leads to intellectual, social and moral decline. In all humbleness we recall that the periods of the great advances in knowledge—the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the historical and evolutionary era of the 19th century—have been periods in which a unifying point of view has given meaning and direction to research and action.

But we offer another challenge—a challenge to Marxists themselves. Too much Marxist writing, especially in America, consists of mere doctrinal exegesis that is wholly discreditable to Marxism. Too often a mistaken sense of organizational loyalty is given precedence over the weight of evidence and of truth. With all too few exceptions, Marxist writing is not rooted in American history, conditions and problems. The whole of American life needs to be explored by Marxist scholarship. There are distortions of Marxist theory that must be set straight and uncritical simplifications that must be filled with a richer content. Many problems in Marxist theory need development, many problems in economics, politics and social history still await clarification. The exposition, application and amplification of Marxism requires, not dogmatic asseverations of faith, but bold and critical intelligence. It requires, moreover, an understanding of the accomplishments of existing knowledge despite its limitations, a vivid sense of the continuity of culture while pressing forward to fresh analyses of new problems, an incorporation within Marxism—as Marx incorporated in his own work—of the best intellectual fruits of the past and present, an acceptance of the tested results of scientific research, a cherishing of every insight and truth no matter what its source.

This is no easy task. To it the editors of the *Marxist Quarterly,* who represent a concentration of Marxist forces regardless of differences on tactical questions, bring a complete independence of all control by any political party or group. They bring to it a spirit of free inquiry guided only by fundamental theory and their intellectual conscience, a confidence in scientific research as the means by which new truths can be won, and a willingness to learn. The editors are confident that there exists in America a sufficient body of writers and readers to insure success of the project.

Science and Socialism

BY BENJAMIN GINZBURG

It is one of the great tragedies of our time that the two major cultural forces of modern life, science and socialism, should see one another through the distorting fog of mutual misunderstanding. For not until these two forces recognize their community of striving and community of purpose—not until, to paraphrase Plato, scientists are socialists and socialists are scientists—"will states and the human race ever cease from ill."

Doubtless Marxists, for their part, would be ready to agree that science has misunderstood the true nature of socialism, while denying that they have in any way misunderstood the true nature of science. Particularly in recent years have they sought to welcome men of science into the fold by stressing the preponderant role that science must play—and is already playing in the Soviet Union—in the construction of a socialist commonwealth. But right at the outset, if one is to insist on a community of purpose between the idea of science and the idea of socialism, it presupposes that cultural ideas have an independent truth value and development—that they, in final analysis, transcend economic class interests and the struggle of classes. The relation between socialism and science would thus proceed from an internal law of logical development, not from the connections of science with capitalism, socialism with the proletariat, and the ultimate proletarian victory in the class struggle.

Or, to put the same point more concretely, there are two ways in which Marxists may formulate their appeal to scientists. They may set out to convince scientists that their interest in the idea of science, when fully developed, must lead them to the advocacy of a socialist economic organization of society. Or they may try to persuade them that, as members of the middle class, they will soon be finding their economic position increasingly insecure, and that therefore they would be well-advised to make an alliance with the party of the proletariat, who will need their services under socialism and is ready to reward them handsomely if they come in on the ground floor. Obviously the only genuine intellectual appeal to science is the first one, but that appeal necessarily comes in conflict with

a vulgar mechanical Marxism that the creative Marxist everywhere rejects. It would be idle to undertake an intellectual analysis of the relation of science to socialism without frankly stating that fact.

With this preface we may approach our theme without danger of confusion. The prevailing coldness or hostility of the average man of science to socialism has its primary source in the traditional abstract conception of the nature of scientific activity. Scientists are looked upon, and look upon themselves, as heroic free lance searchers for pure truth, without thought of practical application or social utility. In illustration of this viewpoint scientists love to quote such anecdotes as that of Faraday's reply to the taunt of a crass Englishman; the Englishman, after examining a piece of electrical apparatus which the great man was proudly displaying, asked sceptically, "What good is it?" "What good is a baby!" retorted Faraday. . . . The scientists, in telling the anecdote, then add drily that the piece of apparatus in question was a model of the electric dynamo, which has revolutionized the economic life of the world. In general scientists like to glorify the non-utilitarian and impractical character of their researches—science so much for the sake of science that a good scientist is supposed to drop his work the moment it has a faint possibility of practical application! At the same time, however, they are not above taking a modest credit for the beneficent practical applications of science—while disclaiming of course any responsibility for the destructive uses or consequences of science (*e.g.* war and technological unemployment).

With this abstract conception of science prevailing—and even where it doesn't prevail, the social attitudes formed on the basis of this conception still prevail—it is inevitable that the average scientist should look upon the situation of science under socialism as the subjection of free intellectual enterprise by the foreign tyranny of the state. The coming of socialism is for him a calamity to be dreaded like the Roman invasion of Syracuse, which overtook Archimedes in the midst of his playing with circles in the sand. Add to these fears the strange jargon of dialectical materialism which the scientist hears from Soviet Russia—the class character of science (a bourgeois science and a proletarian science), the citing of the names of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin as authorities in many purely scientific topics, and it is no wonder that most men of science in bourgeois countries should look upon socialism as a new barbarism.

To dissipate all such fears and the fantastic bogeys erected upon them, it is necessary to get at the basic assumption that science represents a search for pure truth without practical objective. This assumption can be maintained only on the basis of a complete lack of historical and analytical perspective. Historically, as everyone knows who is familiar with the circum-

stances of the rise of modern science, the scientific quest represents the fusion of a practical-technical interest with the Greek philosophic tradition. It was the addition of that interest which enabled the moderns to enter the Promised Land of natural science, whereas the Greeks, for whom science was not sufficiently distinguished from purely contemplative philosophy, stopped at Mount Pisgah.

And not only was modern science developed under the influence of a practical, plebeian current, but it was constituted as a practically directed system of knowledge, as an engineer's control picture rather than as an abstract investigation into the nature of the universe. What precisely is involved in this distinction between abstract and practically directed knowledge? Simply this—until the coming of modern science the myth persisted that there was a single system of knowledge accessible to the human mind contemplating reality without a special point of view. The success of modern science proved on the contrary that the only time nature or experience answers our questions is when they are put from a definite bias, viewpoint or purpose. The point of view of scientific questions is essentially the point of view of the engineer or technician, who seeks in reality a system of entities and relations that are passive and can be relied upon to stay predictably "put" in the future, a system that can therefore serve as a guide for the practical manipulation of external experience to human advantage. There are other points of view, other approaches through which reality may be studied—for instance, the point of view of moral development, with its emphasis on creative potentialities particularly in the human phases of reality; and the esthetic point of view of the enjoyment of the beauty and timelessness of immediate experience. All these points of view give rise to proper questions and valid answers in the different phases of man's intercourse with reality. But there is no proper question and there is no valid answer without the leverage of a special bias or approach.

Thus so-called "pure science" really represents the intensive development and specialized ramification of the theoretical moment of technical practice. While scientists are not always conscious of the relation of their science to technique and technology, the fundamental scheme of scientific knowledge puts it in a mould which makes all scientific discoveries serve as a theoretical basis for potential technology. In the nature of the case, the system of science develops relations, pieces of knowledge which are not directly translatable into technical practice, just as algebra, which is a generalized method for solving arithmetical problems, develops negative, irrational and imaginary roots for which there is not always a direct counterpart in the arithmetical situation. But there is no doubt that the system of science as a whole stands organically harnessed to technique: its

roots are in technique, many of its theories (*e.g.* the theory of thermodynamics) are directly suggested by technical problems, others are tested in technical situations, and all scientific theories are so constituted that they must lend themselves directly or potentially to technical application.

Under the circumstances, the vast technological and economic revolution which has accompanied the rise and development of modern science cannot be set down as a mere accident. It is the direct consequence of the nature and purpose of scientific research. The attempt of the scientist to deny his paternal responsibility for the technical applications of science is therefore as amusing as the attitude of the Trobriand Islanders, who fail to grasp the relationship between sexual intercourse and procreation. His responsibility for the proper utilization of the fruits of scientific invention is far more direct than that of the average citizen, who should be interested in a well-organized society: what happens to the applications of science affects the value and dignity of the scientist's professional work.

To be sure, the scientist may claim that under the social division of labor his responsibility is confined to the proper performance of his individual, specialized task, and that he cannot be concerned with what happens to his work after it leaves his hands. But on that theory of atomic responsibility, the scientist should not be interested in any phase of science outside his own specialty; he should not be interested in the progress of science as a whole, nor should he claim any pride or dignity of calling by virtue of his association with the great army of scientific truth seekers. In so far as the scientist is interested at all beyond his specialty—in other words, in so far as the scientist is a scientist and not an intellectual robot —his interest and his responsibility must extend to the practical applications of science, which as we have seen is an integral and basic part of the whole scientific enterprise.

If the scientist is to assume any concern over the social utilization of the fruits of science, is any other course open to him save to advocate the social ownership and control of the instrumentalities of economic production? Considering that all the human economic instrumentalities are clearly the product of scientific progress, and considering that scientific research —as the scientist has every reason to appreciate—is clearly a social product, such a program is merely returning to society what society produces. But far more important than this consideration is the fact that the combination of scientific progress with the individual profit system is rapidly turning the great and inestimable humanitarian boon of science into a sinister curse which threatens to destroy modern civilization.

The impact of the profit system upon the train of technological progress and increasing productivity should be easy for the scientist to understand,

for it is essentially a mechanical problem, though the forces involved are social in character. Consider that the increasing productivity made possible by scientific and technical progress can be set in motion, under our present economic system, only through the cooperation of owners of large-scale capital; this cooperation is obtained only when the capitalists see an opportunity to monopolize a large part of this increased productivity in the form of profit and to pyramid their gains and enlarge their enterprises. It is easy to see that under such conditions the necessary mechanical balance between productive power and consumptive power will tend to be violated. For a time the balance is maintained through the strategic purchasing power thrown into play while a large capital plant is being built up and before its productivity and its profit expectations mature. But eventually this procedure breaks down. Then the capitalists turn racketeer: after securing their profit by facilitating increased production, they now seek their profit by restraining production and restraining employment through monopolist combinations, aided by the strong-arm methods of state capitalism and fascism. At the same time the struggle for markets engenders wars of such increasing magnitude and intensity that the next world war may well involve a major collapse of civilization.

This schematic summary of the impact of capitalism upon scientific and technological progress leaves out of account the fact that even under capitalism at its best the full practical potentialities of science have scarcely been scratched. Everybody knows that whereas only a hundred years ago the traditional philosophy that the "poor shall always be with us" had to be accepted as an ineluctable fact, today—as far as scientific methods and technical resources are concerned—a veritable reign of plenty is within our grasp. All that is necessary is to translate the mathematical promises of science into effective social practice.

The basic idea of science is a practical idea—the emancipation of man through the mastery of the material forces of nature. The theoretical development of science must be regarded as merely the first phase of the scientific idea, and that phase logically, organically demands the second phase, the practical realization of the promise of science which is socialism. This relationship between theoretical science and socialism is becoming increasingly recognized. The concept of a proletarian science, theoretically different from bourgeois science, has receded from the Soviet laboratories —where it was only verbally effective—into the parlors of the abstract philosophers, where it can linger harmlessly in the way that so many other false ideas have lingered harmlessly in the philosophic tradition. We must regard the real contribution of Soviet science not in any transformation of the theoretical basis of science, but in showing how the idea of science finds

its necessary completion in the creative tasks of socialist construction.

It remains for scientists elsewhere to recognize that relationship, and to do their part in acting on it. And it is an idea from which they can no more escape than Jonah could escape from the sight of the Lord. For it is not possible to stop with theoretical science and be neutral regarding its applications and effects. Neutrality means that science is allowed to breed increasing unemployment and ever more horrible instruments of destruction. It means that scientists will personally have to bear the major part of the responsibility if our civilization suffers collapse at the peak of its potentialities. And if they are not to be neutral, it means that scientists will have to take steps to transform their various associations for the theoretical advancement of science into associations that advance the practical idea of science through social action and ultimately through socialism. Such a suggestion may sound strange indeed in the ears of conventional scientists. But so did the suggestion of Galileo that his colleagues abandon quarreling over Aristotle and look at the heavens through the telescope.

Is it "regimentation" to ask the scientist to join in building the new world of tomorrow? Is it enslavement of truth to translate idea into act? These questions answer themselves. Karl Marx, in appealing to the dispossessed proletarians, told them that they had a world to win. But to scientists one may say that they have a world to rebuild—for themselves and for humanity.

Farm Labor in Fascist Italy[1]

BY CARL T. SCHMIDT

AT A GIVEN moment the worker, the tiller of the soil, must be able to say to himself and to his family: 'If I am really better off today it is due to the institutions that the Fascist Revolution has created'."

With this rhetorical challenge[2] Mussolini doubtless intended his listeners to agree that the Italian workers *are* "better off" today than before the March on Rome and that they owe their greater well-being to the institutions of fascism. Certainly, the skillful propaganda of the fascist government at home and abroad attempts to build up this conclusion—often with great success. But, despite rhetoric and propaganda, the sceptic may still wonder if this would be the view of the "worker, the tiller of the soil."

The purpose of this article is to examine briefly working conditions of farm labor in Italy, and the changes that have taken place in these conditions under the fascist régime.

Economic Structure of the Agricultural Labor Population

A very large proportion of the agricultural population of Italy consists of dependent workers—share-croppers, share-tenants, small holders who must supplement the inadequate production of their minute plots of land by working for others, and wage laborers. According to the occupational census of 1931, roughly 8,000,000 persons over the age of 10 are engaged in agriculture.[3] Of this number, about 3,000,000 are classed as "operating owners," 900,000 as "cash tenants," 1,700,000 as "share tenants," 2,500,000 as "wage-workers," and 27,000 as "managers."[4] But these data give an erroneous impression of the economic status of the rural population.

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1 The present study is part of a broader analysis of the agricultural policy of Fascist Italy in which the author has been engaged since 1935, as a fellow of the Social Science Research Council. The aid of the Council in this work is gratefully acknowledged.

2 Speech to the National Council of Corporations, November 14, 1933.

3 The total working population of ten and more years of age is 17,262,521; 8,083,332 are occupied in agriculture. Italy thus still has a markedly rural character.

4 Istituto Centrale di Statistica del Regno d'Italia, *Censimento generale della popolazione, 21 aprile 1931,* vol. 4, part 2 (Rome 1934).

For one thing, most share-croppers and share-tenants must in fact be considered as agricultural workers who are paid for their labor a share of the crops rather than money wages. Furthermore, many of the "operating owners," because their land is too limited to support them adequately, must gain a substantial (sometimes a major) part of their living from wage labor. They might as reasonably be listed as wage-workers.

The great majority of farmers cultivate exceedingly small areas. The agricultural census of 1930 puts the total number of farm enterprises in Italy at about 4,200,000: 1,500,000 (35.7%) are one hectare (about 2.5 acres) and less in size, and therefore ought to be classed as dwarf holdings rather than as farms; 2,300,000 (54.6%) are more than one and less than ten hectares in area; roughly 400,000 (9.7%) cover more than 10 hectares. The 3,800,000 dwarf and small holdings comprise but 32.7% of all the farm land in the country, whereas the 400,000 large farms control 67.3% thereof. This is evidence of extreme concentration of land ownership in relatively few hands.[5]

The agricultural population of Italy, then, is overwhelmingly proletarian in economic status, if not in sentiment.

Italian agriculture is extremely varied as to types of farm enterprise, crops, methods of cultivation; consequently there is considerable diversity in labor contracts. A detailed analysis of the many kinds of employer-labor relationships would be beyond the scope of this article. However, the more important types of wage labor may be noted: (1) *Garzoni*—resident farm servants, generally employed on medium-sized farms and engaged in miscellaneous work; they are usually hired on yearly contracts and are paid largely in kind. (2) *Salariati*—workers on yearly contracts, employed on medium-sized and large farms, frequently engaged in specialized types of work and paid, in varying proportions, in cash and in kind. (3) *Obbligati* —day laborers under contract to work for a specific employer whenever required, the employer in turn being bound to give them the first chance of work. In view of the widespread unemployment, this is of advantage to the workers and therefore they are generally paid by the day or hour at a lower rate than casual day laborers. (4) *Avventizi* and *Braccianti*— casual day laborers. This class comprises the majority of agricultural wage-workers. They are generally paid by the hour or day (sometimes on a piece work basis), and take employment wherever they find it—often at great distances from their homes.

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5 Istituto Centrale di Statistica . . . , *Censimento generale dell'agricoltura. Censimento delle aziende agricole, 19 marzo 1930* (Rome 1935). A private, unpublished study made available to the author indicates an even more marked concentration: 68.3% of the land owned by only 3.4% of the proprietors (data for 1927).

Share-croppers and share-tenants (*coloni parziari*) also are engaged under a large variety of contracts. Disregarding the diversity of details, two main types may be distinguished: (1) *Compartecipanti* or share-croppers—laborers who work with their families, sometimes with their own tools, on particular plots of land assigned to them by an employer. Their compensation is not fixed wages in cash or in kind but a predetermined share of the crop (usually one-fourth to one-half), the expenses of cultivation being divided in the same proportion with the employer. Their work is carried on under the direction of the employer and they are quite dependent on his orders with respect to selection of crops and methods of cultivation.[6] (2) *Mezzadri* or share-tenants—workers who, with their families, are entrusted by a landlord with the cultivation of a more or less self-contained small farm. Their remuneration is also a predetermined share of the crops (usually one-half) and sometimes the full proceeds from various minor farm activities. Although they usually have somewhat more independence than the *compartecipanti,* they work essentially under the landlord's control, and thus in effect constitute a type of laborer. In practice, share-cropping and share-tenant contracts vary greatly in regard to such details as the amount of work done on the assigned land by the cropper, the extent of working capital contributed by the landowner, the period of the contract, the terms for division of the crops and of expenditures. Finally, it should be observed that cash tenants often replace wage labor, and live and work under conditions little different from those of share-tenants and wage-workers.

Agricultural wage labor of one form or another is to be found in every part of Italy. It is most prominent on the large, commercialized farms of the Po valley, and on the extensive wheat farms of the southeast and Sicily. Share-tenancy is also widely diffused, but has particular prominence in north and central Italy, particularly in Emilia, Tuscany, the Marches and Umbria. Peasant owners of dwarf and small holdings are to be found in every part of the country.

The Struggle for Better Working and Living Conditions

A generation ago the great masses of farm workers lived in extreme misery. Wages were very low and employment was uncertain; heartless exploitation by gang labor contractors, farm managers and landlords was widespread. The share-tenants, while somewhat more secure than wage-workers, generally received a poor share of the crops, and were bound to render a variety of uncompensated, feudalistic services to the landlords.

6 Sometimes a whole group of workers and their families are assigned land for cultivation under a collective contract of *compartecipazione.*

The poverty of the workers and peasants was reflected in their crowded villages of small, dark, insanitary hovels, contrasting acutely with the picturesque and romantic impressions they so frequently gave to sentimental travelers.

Unhygienic living conditions made the rural population the very easy prey of terrible diseases. Particularly in the north, pellagra was rampant owing to the monotonous maize diet of the peasants. Malaria was a characteristically rural disease in vast regions of the country. Epidemics of cholera and typhoid fever were frequent. The great masses of the Italian rural population—bowed under hours of daily drudgery, earning the scantiest living, illiterate, fantastically superstitious, unhealthy—lived in conditions for which a parallel could hardly be found elsewhere in the Western World.[7]

Existence of the government was made known in the villages by the *carabinieri, praetors* and tax collectors. But the peasants took little or no part in the political life of the country. Heavy national and local taxation, levied on almost every conceivable object of production and consumption, largely benefited the ruling class of towns and country; the authority and wealth of the state did little to better the life of the rural proletariat. The indifference of the dominant class towards the agricultural masses was especially marked in the south.

In these circumstances the rural workers were thrown back upon their own resources for the improvement of their lot. For a generation before the World War the countryside was in an almost continuous ferment of mass labor organization and wholesale emigration to countries where the prospects of living were brighter.

Although labor organizations were illegal before 1900, attempts, frequently violent, were made everywhere to develop them. Hundreds of thousands of agricultural workers took part in a revolutionary movement in Sicily during 1890-94, and again in the early 1900's. This early agitation ended in bloody suppression by the authorities. After the turn of the century mass migration from the south to the New World, the consequent reduction of the labor supply and the inflow of capital by means of remittances and return of relatively prosperous emigrants, led to a considerable amelioration of rural life in the southern provinces. On the whole, labor organization did not flourish there. The socialists, in contrast with their success in the north, made little headway—partly, ap-

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7 Detailed descriptions of agricultural conditions a generation ago are contained in the official reports: Stefano Jacini, *Atti della giunta per la inchiesta agraria. Relazione finale* (Rome 1885); Eugenio Faina, *Inchiesta parlamentare sulle condizioni dei contadini nelle provincie meridionali e nella Sicilia. Relazione finale* (Rome 1911).

parently, because of bad tactics, partly because of the hold of the Church on the superstitious *contadini.*

But in the north the labor movement—led from the first by socialists —grew rapidly after 1900. Local village unions ("leagues of defence") spread all over the Po basin within a few years and soon amalgamated into provincial federations. In 1901 a national organization of rural workers—the *Federazione Nazionale dei Lavoratori della Terra* or *Federterra* —was founded; at the end of 1906, when it joined the General Confederation of Labor, it comprised about 280,000 members. From the first these socialist leagues employed all the familiar weapons of aggressive unionism, especially the strike and boycott, to force employers to accept collective labor contracts. Agricultural workers' unions were also organized under Roman Catholic auspices, but were relatively unimportant until after the World War. The catholic organization was most successful among share-tenants and small proprietors, little touched by socialist propaganda and traditionally tied to the Church. The catholics looked largely to cooperation and a greater extension of peasant proprietorshop to improve rural living conditions, whereas the so-called "red unions" sought, at least in principle, the goal of socialized agriculture.[8]

Both socialist and catholic rural movements reached their high points immediately after the War. In 1920, when at their maximum strength, the socialist unions of agricultural workers had 862,000 members, and the catholic unions of workers, tenants and small proprietors, comprised 945,000 members.[9] The number of agricultural strikes also gives a notion of the strength of the unions, particularly the socialist; during 1900-14 there were 3,005 agricultural strikes, involving as many as 250,000 workers in a single year; in 1919-20 a million and a half workers took part in 397 strikes.[10]

At first the poorly organized employers scarcely resisted the aggressive tactics of the unions. Collective labor contracts led to higher wage rates, a shorter working day and generally improved working conditions. With the continuance of labor agitation, however, employers began to organize for defense. They reduced their demand for wage-workers by introducing

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8 For accounts of these early agricultural mass movements, see F. Vöchting, *Die Romagna: Eine Studie über Halbpacht und Arbeiterwesen in Italien* (Karlsruhe 1927); Comte de Racquigny, *Le prolétariat rural en Italie: Ligues et Grèves de Paysans* (Paris 1904); A. Sartorius v. Waltershausen, *Die Sizilianische Agraverfassung und ihre Wandlungen, 1780-1912* (Leipzig 1913); A. Marabini, *Proletariato agricolo e fascismo in Italia* (Brussels 1935).

9 Confederazione Nazionale dei Sindacati Fascisti dell'Agricoltura, *L'organizzazione sindacale agricola del fascismo* (Rome 1932), p. 54.

10 Ministero delle Finanze, *Documenti sulla condizione finanziaria ed economica dell'Italia* (Rome 1923); A. Serpieri, *La guerra e le classi rurali italiane* (Bari 1930), Part 2, Ch. 1.

machinery, by curtailing cultivation of crops that require much labor, and by developing share-cropping and tenancy contracts. This increased unemployment, which in turn led the organized workers to demand still higher wages and to develop methods of resisting labor displacement.[11] At the same time share-tenants, by increasingly exchanging work with other tenants and thus diminishing their need of hired labor, often found themselves in conflict with the workers' unions. But the tenants were at odds with proprietors, too, as regards the terms of share contracts. Despite the growing resistance of employers and much unemployment, the living standards of the workers rose appreciably.[12]

Industrialization, a general rise in the technical efficiency of agriculture and, more important, emigration, all had a part in raising the tenor of rural life.[13] Yet it is certain that the great advance realized by the agricultural workers is attributable in larger degree to the activities of the unions. Not only were they effective in raising wages and in reducing the agricultural working day, but also in providing better distributed employment among the available labor supply. This was accomplished by setting up employment bureaus and by the establishment of the "tax in workers." The organized workers' movement, particularly as represented by the socialists

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11 As, for example, the establishment of consumers' cooperatives and of collective farms which absorbed part of the surplus labor; attempts to limit use of machinery and to require farmers to employ only the machinery owned by workers' organizations; efforts to reduce the exchange of labor between tenant farmers; imposition of a "tax in workers" (obliging employers to hire a minimum number of workers per unit of cultivated land). This, of course, was serious interference with the basis of the private property system. (See Asher Hobson, "The Landless Agricultural Laborer in Italy" and "The Collective Leasing and Farming of Land in Italy," *Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics,* October 1925, January 1926.) Employers' preference for non-members of unions and discrimination against members obliged the unions to develop methods of forcing the unorganized into their ranks. This involved, among other things, a struggle against practices that tend to "bind the worker to the land," such as wages paid in kind and *compartecipazione.* The unions also pressed—and with success—for government execution of public works in which large numbers of rural workers could be employed.

12 Indexes of money and real wages in agriculture (published by the Istituto Centrale di Statistica) show large advances between 1905 and 1923. A national index of real daily wages of ordinary men workers (1913-14=100) stands at 93 in 1905; 104 in 1910; 129 in 1915; 150 in 1920; and 150 in 1923 (the peak year). These advances were much more substantial in the north—the main locale of the union movement—than in the south. (Cf. Istituto Centrale di Statistica . . . , *I salari agricoli in Italia dal 1905 al 1933*—Rome 1934. See also Table 1, below.) Another study indicates a rise of 33.5% in average real wages of agricultural day laborers throughout the country between 1913-14 and 1919. (Confederazione Nazionale dei Sindacati Fascisti dell'Agricoltura, *I salari nell'agricoltura tratti dai contratti di lavoro dal 1913 al 1931*—Rome 1931.) The agricultural working day at the beginning of this century generally was "from sunrise to sunset." In 1919 the *Federterra* secured the 8-hour day for all agricultural workers. Many contracts specified eight hours as the maximum in all seasons. Paid holidays for workers were also frequently stipulated. Furthermore, the ravages of malaria and pellagra were greatly reduced during 1900-15.

13 For evidence of high positive correlation between emigration and wage rises, see Sartorius v. Waltershausen, *op. cit.,* p. 285.

in the national parliament, was responsible too for much of the impetus behind the development of social legislation. Continual pressure led to the passage of laws providing for hygienic control of certain types of work,[14] compulsory and free distribution of quinine in malarial regions, the recognition of collective labor contracts, compulsory accident, old age, invalidity and unemployment insurance, and government supported employment agencies.[15] Moreover, the socialist movement made increasing numbers of middle-class Italians aware of the miserable economic and cultural conditions of the rural population; it tended to shake the peasantry out of its passivity and torpor; it did much to change the relationships between landlord and peasant "from that of master and servant to that of man and man."[16]

Post-War Social Struggles and Fascist Counter-Revolution

The World War brought heavy sacrifices to the rural masses, at home as well as at the front. On the whole the poorer peasants, in consequence of the loss of man-power and governmental policies of price control and requisitions, paid dearly for the maintenance of the war machine. As the slaughter dragged on, month after month, with victory uncertain, old animosities grew. A bitter resentment spread among the *contadini* against townsfolk, landlords, industrialists, whom they blamed for having brought Italy into the conflict for selfish purposes; they came to believe that they were being exposed to death and misery for the profit of others. All of this immensely whetted the old land hunger of the peasants—at the War's end they must be compensated for their losses by possession of the land. The political leaders, hard put to maintain the loyalty of the war-weary peasant soldiers, found it expedient to encourage this dream and to make vague but extravagant promises about the new social order that would be established once victory was won. The "red" unions also found it advantageous to join in the cry: "The land to the peasants!" Moreover, the Russian Revolution was an inspiration and a promise to many embittered workers.

The end of the War brought difficulties in readjustment of the economy to a peace-time basis. One of the most serious of these was large unemployment among agricultural workers. Many farm employers, especially in the north, had been obliged during the War to carry on with relatively

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14 For instance, that of the notoriously exploited rice field workers.

15 Cf. Leon Audoly, *La protection légale des travailleurs agricoles en Italie* (Paris 1913); "Collective Agreements in Italian Agriculture," *International Labour Review*, November 1926, January 1927.

16 A. Serpieri, *La politica agraria in Italia* (Piacenza 1925), p. 31.

little labor and so had come increasingly to use machinery. This led to resistance to the employment of demobilized soldiers.

All of these factors intensified the mass movement against the old order and, indeed, spread among the ranks of the working class a vague belief in the necessity of social revolution. In 1919-20 this revolutionary will among the workers expressed itself in a great wave of agricultural and industrial strikes particularly in the north, and in central and southern Italy in the seizure of latifondists' land by peasants. The left-wing organizations used this mass pressure to bring about further improvements in working conditions; wage rates were pushed up, the working day shortened, restrictions placed on the use of machinery, and employers subjected to further controls in respect of the placement of workers. The share-tenants obtained better contract terms. Politically, the socialists and the catholic populists made rapid advances. Their representation in parliament was much increased, and many communes in the north were governed by socialists. At the same time, land variously estimated at 40,000 to 200,000 hectares was invaded by peasants' organizations and applied to their own purposes.[17]

The ruling class and its governmental representatives tended at first to be hesitant, if not passive, before the threatening rural and urban masses. Employers felt themselves obliged to accept the terms of the collective contracts stipulated by the labor organizations, and landlords offered little resistance to the land seizures. The government through a series of decrees confirmed (with qualifications) the seizures that had already taken place, but also attempted to head off further direct expropriation of land. Politicians vied with one another in drawing up projects for the division of the great estates among peasants. A series of laws providing for the extension of social insurance and for government aid to the workers' co-operative movement was enacted.

The agricultural labor struggle was but part of a revolutionary movement throughout the country. Everywhere the old dominant class of factory owners, landlords, tradesmen and government officials was in retreat before the agricultural and industrial workers. When in September, 1920 factories all over the north were occupied by the workers, Italy appeared to be on the verge of social revolution.

But the revolution did not come. The leadership of the proletarian

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17 On these post-war developments in agriculture see: A. Serpieri, *La Guerra . . .* (cited); Ministero per il Lavoro e la Previdenza Sociale, *I contratti collettivi di lavoro stipulati dalla Federazione Nazionale dei Lavoratori della Terra nel 1920* (Rome 1921); Vöchting, *op. cit.*; G. Rocca, "L'occupazione delle terre 'incolte'," *Riforma Sociale,* May-June 1920, pp. 221-52; Ignazio Silone, *Der Faschismus* (Zurich 1934); A. Serpieri, *Studi sui contratti agrari* (Bologna 1920); Marabini, *op. cit.*

movement was divided, hesitant and in part essentially conservative.[18] The socialist chiefs temporized in the face of the very opportunity for which they claimed to have been working so long. When they accepted the compromise solution of the crisis proposed by the government their movement had failed. The striking workers went back to their jobs, disillusioned with their leadership. As the revolutionary wave ebbed, conservative elements struck back at the socialist organizations. They found a ready instrument for this purpose in the fascist movement.

In the early years the fascists had attempted to rival the socialists and populists in demagogic demands for social reconstruction. They had at first little success in attracting any significant following. However, as the revolutionary movement collapsed the dominant class more or less consciously realized the value of hyper-nationalistic appeals reinforced by terrorism—the essence of fascist demagogy. Supported by the money of the big industrialists and landlords, tolerated and often actively helped by government officials, and recruiting their mass following among the petty bourgeoisie of towns and country, and also among some elements of the working class, the fascists in 1921-25 waged an increasingly successful war against the old labor organizations. Socialists were ousted from local government posts, members of the unions were persecuted, union headquarters, newspapers and cooperatives were destroyed. The power of the left-wing movement was broken and its membership declined enormously.[19]

Viewed historically, the "March on Rome" in October, 1922 was but a step (and not a decisive one) in the development of the present politico-economic system of Italy. It was not until 1925-26, with the sweeping aside of the entire facade of democracy and libertarianism, that the "totalitarian" (or "police") dictatorship was finally established. Once firmly in control of the governmental machinery it was possible to give absolute predominance to the fascist conception of labor organization. An agreement with employers followed by legal measures finally swept aside all but the fascist unions. This process was crowned by the syndical laws of 1926 and the "Charter of Labor" of 1927, which presumably laid down governing principles for employer-labor relationships.[20]

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18 That the populist leaders were anti-revolutionary goes without saying. Many socialists, too, found themselves unable to accept a social overturn.

19 In 1921-22 the *Federterra* lost over 550,000 members; in 1924 its membership sank to about 15,000. The following of the catholic unions also declined drastically. (Confederazione nazionale dei sindacati fascista, *op. cit.*, p. 59). Of the 8,000 cooperative societies affiliated in 1922 with the *Lega Nazionale delle Cooperative* (the socialist cooperative federation) only 2,000 remained in August, 1923. (E. A. Lloyd, *The Cooperative Movement in Italy*—London 1925—p. 108.) For details of the fascist reign of terror see G. Salvemini, *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy* (New York 1927); Silone, *op. cit.;* M. Nicoletti, *Le fascisme contre le paysan* (Paris 1929).

20 An act of April 3, 1933 extends the legal principles in respect of collective labor agreements

The Fascist Agricultural Labor Organization

The essentials of fascist labor legislation have been abundantly described; here they will be referred to only briefly.[21] Parallel organizations of workers and employers—the former, at any rate, completely under the control of the government—are established in every branch of the economy. Only one organization in any occupational group is "legally" recognized; in practice all other workers' organizations are prohibited. The parallel "syndicates" conclude labor contracts that bind all employers and workers (members and non-members) of the branch concerned. Again, this is equivalent to saying that the terms of employment are defined by the governmental hierarchy. All forms of independent criticism on the part of workers—as, for instance, the strike—are illegal. Disputes involving collective agreements are settled, if possible, through mediation by syndicate officials or the Ministry of Corporations, or by special sessions of the courts—that is, in any case by the government. No extraordinary insight is necessary to suspect that this system—despite superficially impressive official vestments—is actually a means for delivering the working class into the control of a machine operating in the interests of the dominant employing group. Only demonstration is needed.

The fascists had attempted, from the first, to organize occupational associations. In 1920-22, while the left-wing unions were declining, the fascist labor and employer organizations became increasingly stronger. These early "corporations" were mixed associations of employers and workers. After the inauguration of the new syndicate system in 1926, the original fascist Corporation of Agriculture, with its subsidiary federations of landowners, agricultural technicians and farm workers, was reorganized into two federations, one representing the landowners, and one the technicians and workers.[22] The agricultural workers' organization was at first affiliated with a general national federation of workers of all trades. With the abolition of the latter at the end of 1928 the agricultural workers were grouped under a confederation, no longer affiliated with non-agricultural workers.

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to share-tenancy and cash-tenancy contracts concluded by the syndical organizations. It is supplemented by a "Charter of Share-Tenancy," embodying basic rules for share-farming contracts.

21 For critical accounts see Carmen Haider, *Capital and Labor Under Fascism* (New York 1930); L. Rosenstock-Franck, *L'économie corporative Fasciste* (Paris 1934); G. Salvemini, "Capitale e lavoro nell'Italia fascista," *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* (Paris), August, November, 1933; and *Under the Axe of Fascism* (New York 1936). Representative of the genuflecting official point of view is Fausto Pitigliani, *The Italian Corporative State* (New York 1934). Unfortunately few scholars have penetrated beneath the surface of legislative formalities.

22 For a time there was a hot dispute as to whether cash-tenants and share-tenants should

This organization (Confederazione fascista dei lavoratori dell'agricoltura) is composed of four national "category federations:" (1) share-tenants; (2) ordinary wage-earners and day laborers; (3) workers in special agricultural branches (animal husbandry, forestry, etc.); (4) administrative and technical workers in agricultural and forest enterprises.[23] Provincial unions and local syndicates of workers in the four categories, make up the subordinate structure. The worker-members take no active part in the functioning of the syndicates; officials are named by and responsible to the government, and are overwhelmingly drawn from the bourgeoisie. In early 1936 the fascist confederation claimed 2,204,947 members.[24]

Unions of agricultural employers were organized in north Italy after the World War to fight the militant workers (and in this mission were allied with the punitive *fasci di combattimento*). They were merged, early in 1922, with the first fascist general agricultural organization, the Confederation of Agriculture, which, in turn, was affiliated with the National Confederation of Syndical Corporations. In 1926, after the promulgation of the syndical laws, the agricultural employers reorganized, forming an autonomous confederation (Confederazione Nazionale Fascista degli Agricoltori). This also comprises four "category federations:" (1) employing landowners and cash-tenants; (2) non-cultivating landowners who have let their land; (3) non-employing, cultivating landowners and cash-tenants; (4) managers of agricultural enterprises. Provincial and local organization is similar to that of the workers. Total membership of the confederation at the end of 1934 was 712,697.[25]

Agricultural experts (economists, agronomists, etc.) were originally united with the confederation of workers. However, in accordance with the wishes of the employers, the experts have been grouped into a separate

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belong to one or the other of the two new organizations. It was finally decided to associate share-tenants with the workers and cash-tenants with the employers. For an official account of the agricultural syndicate organizations see F. Angelini and M. Muzzarini, "L'organizzazione sindacale dei ceti rurali," in Ministero dell'Agricoltura e delle Foreste, *I progressi dell'agricoltura italiana in regime fascista* (Rome 1934).

23 True at the time of writing. The number and nature of these subordinate federations has changed several times in recent years.

24 That is, approximately 54% of the total number of tenants and workers represented. *Lavoro Agricolo Fascista,* March 15, 1936.

25 That is, about 20 per cent of the total number of landowners and cash-tenants. For a full description of the structure and activities of this confederation, see Confederazione Nazionale Fascista degli Agricoltori, *Dieci anni di attività sindacale 1922-32* (Rome 1933). Close relations are maintained between the confederation and various agricultural trade associations, such as the federations of agricultural distributive cooperatives, of beet growers, of cooperative wineries and dairies, etc.

syndicate attached to the general confederation of "professional men and artists."

Formally, the chief function of this syndicate system is the making of collective labor contracts. Other functions include representation of employers and workers before the courts, selection of candidates for the Chamber of Deputies, the study of agricultural problems, administration and supervision of social welfare schemes, collaboration in the government's agricultural program. Each confederation maintains an extensive administrative, economic and publicity staff. Dues are collected from all employers and workers represented.

Such in bare outline is the complex structure of the syndical organizations in terms of whose functioning the working conditions of agricultural labor presumably are fixed. Commentators write rhapsodically about the syndicates, their achievement of "class collaboration," their mission in giving the rural masses a voice in the life of the nation, their promotion of better living conditions and more efficient production; the hundreds of collective contracts, national and provincial, developed by the confederations, and the thousands of labor disputes settled by their mediation are cited as evidence.[26] But what matters—yet rarely gets the notice of these writers —is the hours of work, the level of wages, the security of the job established under the syndical system. This, not formal structure, demands the attention of the serious enquirer.

Agricultural Working Conditions under Fascism

a) *Hours of Work.* Efforts of labor organizations to introduce the 8-hour day met with legal recognition in the decree of March 15, 1923, which stipulated that the normal working hours in all industries were not to exceed eight a day or 48 a week.[27] However, a decree of June 30, 1926 authorized employers to increase the working day to nine hours, the ninth hour to be paid for at a rate 10% above that for normal hours.[28]

These general regulations are shot through with many qualifications. For instance, the decree of 1923 provides that, in case of technical, seasonal or weather contingencies, a maximum of 10 additional hours per week may be required without further compensation. Overtime not in excess of 2 hours per day or 12 per week may be added to the normal time; this

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26 By the end of 1935, 33 agricultural labor contracts of a national or interprovincial, and 1164 of a provincial character had been published. (Data from the Ministry of Corporations).

27 In agriculture, this maximum was to apply only to hired laborers, not to share-tenants.

28 Three peasants of the province of Lecce who in August, 1926, distributed printed protests against the 9-hour day were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 4 to 6 years. (*Corriere della Sera,* July 28, 29, 1927).

is to be paid for at a rate 10% higher than that for ordinary hours. Working hours do not include breaks for meals or rest; many agreements stipulate that time spent in going to and coming from the fields (often quite long) also is not included. Furthermore, the legal limits may be exceeded when a suspension of work might entail damage to human beings or to production. [29]

Obviously, these qualifications offer employers easy opportunities for prolonging the working day beyond the statutory limit. The significance of the legal maximum thus is practically destroyed. Moreover, the collective contracts generally provide for various daily maxima in different seasons of the year, merely obtaining an *annual average* of 8 hours a day. Thus, during the winter months— when in any case it is not possible to carry on much work—the maximum hours are frequently fixed at 6 a day; during the spring and autumn they are 8, and in the summer, when work is at its heaviest, 9 and often 10 hours are the rule. This means that the laborers who find employment only in the summer (and these are numerous) are obliged to work well beyond the legal limit without extra compensation. Furthermore, it appears that even these wide legal limits are frequently surpassed by employers who violate the contracts.[30]

b) *Wages*.[31] Money wages in agriculture and industry have had much the same trend since the World War: decline in 1921 and 1922, then a rise during the period of inflation to 1927. With measures leading to the stabilization of the lira in December, 1927 began a period of continual and drastic wage-cuts that continued into 1935. During this period the government intervened actively to force down the level of wages.[32] Since

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29 International Institute of Agriculture, *International Yearbook of Agricultural Legislation, 1923* (Rome 1924), p. 914; International Labour Office, *Collective Agreements in Agriculture* (Geneva 1933), pp. 87-88.

30 Paid vacations for agricultural workers in continuous employment for more than one year were introduced in principle in the Charter of Labor. Those actually provided in the collective contracts are short—3 to 6 days, for the most part. (Confederazione Fascista dei Lavoratori dell'Agricoltura, *Problemi corporativi del lavoro agricolo nel campo internazionale*—Rome 1935—p. 37 ff.)

31 There are no legal minimum wages. The Charter of Labor (par. 12) declares that "wages shall be fixed without reference to any general rules as a matter of agreement between the parties to the collective contracts." The fascist attitude is that "the Charter of Labor . . . has outmoded all the old theories [of wages]. In the corporative economy there is no minimum wage, as there is no maximum wage. The guarantee of adequate wages lies in the action of the syndicates, the conciliatory action of the corporate organs, the decisions of the labour courts." (Confederazione nazionale dei sindacati fascisti dell'agricoltura, *I salari* . . . (cited) p. 37, ff.) "Nevertheless," according to Haider, *op. cit.*, p. 157, "minimum wages are persistently demanded by the working population." Mussolini, in a speech on May 26, 1934 gave as the rule for fascist wage policy: "The greatest possible quantity of labor to the greatest number of workers—ceasing to put the accent on the size of the wage."

32 Already in October, 1927 the fascist party ruled that wages must be reduced by 10% to

early 1935 the general downward movement of wages has been suspended. Although the decline in wages has been general, agricultural workers have been more seriously affected than those in industry or commerce.[33]

All commentators agree that there has been a substantial decline in wages during the last ten years; there is little agreement, however, as to the extent of the decline or its significance in terms of real income.[34] Officially sanctioned wage statistics are often mutually inconsistent, and competent observers are of the opinion that they have a decided upward bias. At any rate, it can be safely assumed that they will not represent conditions to be worse than they actually are. Of course, it is difficult to generalize about wage levels when local conditions and terms of employment vary as much as they do in Italy.

The official statistics thus indicate an average national decline of 38% in nominal wage rates of agricultural day labor in the period 1927-35. In the individual provinces and agricultural occupations the reductions vary considerably (roughly from 20% to 60%), but in every instance they have been serious.[35]

Actual earnings of agricultural labor, in money and produce, have declined even more, however, for the years since 1926 have seen enormous growth both in casual employment and unemployment. Unfortunately, only scattered evidence regarding annual incomes of agricultural workers is

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20%. Further reductions took place thereafter, despite declarations by Mussolini in 1928 and 1931 that none would be permitted. In November, 1930 the wages of all government employees were cut by 12%, and the syndical organizations followed this lead by reductions ranging from 8% to 10% in industry and 15% to 20% in agriculture. Further cuts of varying size were imposed afterwards.

33 The official indexes of wages of industrial workers and of ordinary male agricultural laborers show declines of 22% and 28% respectively, during the period 1928-35. (Istituto Centrale di Statistica . . ., *Bollettino dei Prezzi,* various numbers, 1928-35.)

34 At a congress of the confederation of agricultural workers in 1932 it was declared that from 1926 to 1932 wages had fallen 30% in Emilia, 34% in Lombardy, and as much as 40-50% in certain provinces. A writer in *Lavoro Fascista* (October 26, 1934) points out that contractual wages in various provinces of Sicily fell 10-30% from 1930 to 1934. According to the *Lavoro Agricolo Fascista* (the journal of the agricultural workers' confederation), "There are provinces, such as Milan, Pavia, Cremona, where the reductions have reached as high as 45-60%" (November 29, 1931); "From 1927 to to-day wages have fallen on the average 45%" (May 15, 1932); "The peasants . . . have seen their wages cut by 50%" (August 7, 1932). Generally, fascist writers skim lightly over the subject of wages.

35 For instance, the daily wages of rice weeders (average of eight northern provinces) fell from Lire 22.50 in 1926 to Lire 9.50 in 1935; hourly wages of men day laborers in Lombardy dropped from Lire 1.80 in June, 1927 to 1.27 in June, 1935; in Calabria, during the same period, from Lire 1.80 to 0.92. For further details in respect of wage rates see "Statistics of Wages of Agricultural Workers in Various Countries 1927-34," *International Labour Review* (November-December 1934); P. Albertario, *I salari agricoli della Bassa Lombardia 1880-1931;* "I braccianti agricoli in Italia ed il sindacalismo fascista," *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* (December 1932); Istituto Centrale di Statistica . . . , *I salari agricoli in Italia dal 1905 al 1933* (Rome 1934); *Bollettino dei Prezzi,* various numbers.

TABLE I

GENERAL TREND OF AGRICULTURAL WAGES

Ordinary Day Laborers, Male; Annual Averages, 1905-35

	1. Hourly wages (*Istituto Centrale di Statistica*)*		2. Daily wages (*Confederation of Agricultural Workers*)†	
	a. Amount in Lire	b. Purchasing Power (1913-14=100)	a. Amount in Lire	b. Purchasing Power (1913-14=100)
1905-09	0.18	94.8		
1910-14	0.22	98.4		
1913-14			2.43	100
1915-19	0.56	139.3		
1919	0.88	168	10.62	133.5
1920	1.26	158	11.78	109.7
1921	1.31	153	13.41	102.0
1922	1.47	158	13.08	107.6
1923	1.48	161	12.88	107.3
1924	1.49	157	12.86	100.4
1925	1.61	149	14.13	95.2
1926	1.67	144	14.24	89.6
1927	1.63	155	14.01	98.1
1928	1.52	157	13.05	101.4
1929	1.51	152	12.94	97.7
1930	1.45	149	12.47	96.8
1931	1.26	148	10.49§	87.8§
1932	1.15	141		
1933	1.08	143		
1934	1.05	146		
1935‡	1.04	143		

* The Istituto in 1934 published series (based on a study by Paola Arcari) of nominal and real wages of agricultural day laborers for the period 1905-33. But the series of nominal wage rates published more recently by the Istituto does not agree with the Arcari data. In order, therefore, to obtain one index for the entire period 1905-35 it has been necessary to "splice" the two series. The lire data are annual arithmetic means of maximum and minimum wages, as reported periodically by the directors of the Cattedre Ambulanti di Agricoltura in each province. The index of purchasing power is based on the official index of the cost of living for 47 cities.

† Annual weighted averages of wage rates fixed in collective contracts. The number of workers in each province has served as a basis of weighting. Because of the decline in working hours per day during the period considered daily rates are selected as more accurate than hourly rates. The cost factor in the purchasing power index is the cost of living index of Milan province. No national cost of living index with a pre-War base, and no index of the rural cost of living, are available.

‡ Average of first nine months.

§ Average of first six months.

Sources: Istituto Centrale di Statistica . . . *Bollettino Mensile di Statistica Agraria e Forestale* May, 1934; *Bollettino dei Prezzi,* various numbers, 1934-35; Confederazione Nazionale dei Sindacati Fascista dell'Agricoltura, *op. cit.,* p. 270 ff.

available. Thus, for instance, in the southern district of Milan province the salary of a man in fixed employment was estimated at 4,800 lire a year in the period 1920-21, 5,070 lire in 1925-26, and 2,940 lire in 1931-32.[36] Employment during only 150-180 days per year is very frequent in the Po basin. A typical agricultural laborer in the province of Forlì was employed only 95 days throughout the year 1934, and earned a total of 1297 lire. It has been stated, further, that many workers in that province, especially in the hills, could earn 1000 lire a year only with difficulty. Agricultural workers in Sicily in 1934 were said to be unable to find employment for more than 160 days per year, during which period they earned 8 to 9 lire per day.[37]

During the deflationary period after 1927 the government made vigorous efforts to bring down prices of consumption goods. However, these efforts were decidedly less effective than those to reduce wages.[38] According to the index of the Istituto Centrale di Statistica, real hourly wages in agriculture in 1933 were 9-10% below those of 1928 and 15% below those of 1919. The index of the agricultural workers' confederation shows 1931 real wages 13% below those of 1928, 34% below those of 1919, and 12.2% below those of 1913-14.[39] It must be emphasized that these observations relate only to nominal hourly or daily rates. Taking into account the greatly increased unemployment, frequent violation of contract rates by employers and the trend towards payment in kind, it is certain that the agricultural laboring population of Italy has suffered a very serious decline in its real income under the fascist régime.[40]

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36 *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* (cited), pp. 112-18.

37 *Lavoro Fascista,* October 23, 26, 1934. For further data on annual earnings of peasants and agricultural workers, see *Lavoro Agricolo Fascista,* June 22, 1930; *Lavoro Fascista,* November 1, 1931; Aldo Pagani, *I braccianti della valle Padana* (Rome 1932); A. Brizi, *Compartecipazione agraria e contadini partecipanti in Campania e in Lucania* (Rome 1936). See also the series of studies of peasant family living standards published by the Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (*Monografie di famiglie rurali, 11 vols.,* Rome 1931-35).

38 The official cost of living index for 47 cities stood at 100 on June 1, 1927, and at 71.96 on July 1, 1935 (Istituto Centrale di Statistica, *Bollettino dei Prezzi,* August 8, 1935, p. 455). This index is not particularly applicable to agricultural workers, but may be taken as an approximation of the general trend of living costs in town and country. Declines of consumption goods prices in country districts are said to lag several months behind those in cities. (Confederazione Nazionale dei Sindacati Fascisti dell'Agricoltura, *op. cit.,* p. 24.) This must be borne in mind in examining the index of real wages of agricultural labor.

39 Examination of rates in particular occupations and districts indicates that in some cases real wages fell by as much as one-third between 1927 and 1935, and study of the international comparison of real wages and the industrial and agricultural wages in various countries, published by the International Labour Office, gives good reason to believe that real wages of agricultural workers in Italy are lower than in any other country of Central or Western Europe.

40 Texts of the collective agreements often enable employers to alter the nominal tariff wage. For instance, it is possible to shift workers from one category to another, in order to alter their

c) *Unemployment and Unemployment Relief.* Agricultural laborers have suffered not only from falling wages but also from reduced chances of finding work. Rural unemployment was very large in 1921-22, then declined to relatively low levels in 1925-26, and from 1927 to 1934 mounted rapidly. Only in the last year has it fallen—a consequence, in large part, of mobilization for the war in Ethiopia. The number of jobless agricultural workers, particularly prominent in the Po basin, has been a large proportion of the total national unemployment. Part-time employment has also been large.

Italy was the first country in the world to develop a system of obligatory unemployment insurance providing benefits for all categories of wage earners in industry and agriculture. This was established under a law of October 19, 1919. However, because of alleged difficulties in administering the scheme in the field of agriculture, rural workers have been deprived of unemployment insurance since the end of 1923.

The mounting agricultural unemployment of recent years has obliged the government to provide a variety of aids to the jobless. This has consisted largely of the extension of employment exchanges, encouragement of seasonal migration to regions where workers can be temporarily absorbed, recourse to the "tax in workers" and, most important, large-scale development of public works. (In one sense, the military measures in 1935-36 must be considered as a type of "public works" for the relief of unemployment.) At the same time efforts have been made to transform the agricultural wage-workers into share-croppers or tenants, by settling workers and their families on reclaimed lands and by endeavoring to extend the share-cropping system.[41] Emigration—formerly so important as an outlet for the poverty-stricken agricultural workers and peasants—has been made in-

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wages. Thus, Article 16 of a contract for salaried agricultural workers in the province of Milan (August 1932) states that "the worker who is not capable of the task to which he is assigned may be changed to another category. In case of such shift his wage becomes that of the new category, and from the day of such shift." (*Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà,* cited, p. 116). To be realistic, any description of labor conditions based on provisions of the collective agreements must take into account the numerous breaches of such provisions. That violations are not infrequent is shown by the many complaints of workers, guarded though they usually are. The growth of unemployment, particularly, has been attended by increasing violations on the part of employers. For example, workers "are obliged by the scarcity of jobs to compete with one another to the extent of making contract terms almost meaningless" (*Lavoro Fascista,* May 21, 1929); "Violations continue all along the line" (*Lavoro Agricolo Fascista,* July 31, 1932); "The majority of employers do not respect the tariff wages of the laborers" (*ibid.,* August 7, 1932); "It is not always easy to make a labor contract, but once completed the difficulty then is to make it observed" (*Lavoro d'Italia,* September 13, 1929). According to *Lavoro Fascista* (May 5, 1929), violations reduced wages 20%, sometimes 50% below the contract terms. For the development of wage payments in kind, see below.

41 That is, as fascist leaders say, to "deproletarianize" the farm wage-workers. (See below.) An attempt to reduce the number of women workers and some tendency towards prohibiting the introduction of labor-saving machinery are also observable.

TABLE II

UNEMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND IN ALL INDUSTRIES

Number of Unemployed Workers in Months of Maximum and Minimum Unemployment, 1922-35 (In Thousands)

Years and Months		Agriculture	All Industries	Years and Months		Agriculture	All Industries
1922	Jan.	194		1929	Feb.	194	489
	July	49			June	29	193
1923	Jan.	99	392	1930	June	32	322
	Aug.	25	179		Dec.	178	642
1924	Jan.	83	281	1931	June	58	574
	Sep.	17	116		Dec.	236	982
1925	Feb.	36	157	1932	Feb.	313	1148
	Aug.	9	72		June	119	905
1926	July	9	80	1933	Jan.	304	1225
	Dec.	50	181		July	110	824
1927	June	24	215	1934	Jan.	333	1158
	Dec.	131	414		June	88	831
1928	Jan.	126	439	1935	Jan.	253	1012
	July	36	234		June	66	638

Sources: Data for 1922-27, Istituto Centrale di Statistica . . ., *Annuario Statistico, 1928;* for 1928-34, *Annuario Statistico, 1928-35;* for 1935, *Bollettino Mensile di Statistica,* various numbers, 1935. These statistics of unemployment, based on estimates made monthly by officials of labor exchanges, seem subject to a considerable margin of error. Serious errors can creep into the estimates in consequence of the method of collecting the data; furthermore, observers have pointed to contradictions between the regional estimates and the final figures published by the central statistical organization. (See G. Salvemini, "Italian Unemployment Statistics," *Social Research,* August 1934; Pagani, *op. cit.,* pp. 61-2). It should be noted, too, that these data do not take account of the reduction of wage work among small peasant proprietors. At any rate, taken at their face value the data indicate that 10-15% of all agricultural laborers have been out of work during the winters 1931-35. This is relatively higher than unemployment among industrial workers.

creasingly difficult since the War by countries to which it was formerly directed in an important degree. But the fascist régime itself has taken drastic steps to reduce emigration.

The early system of government employment exchanges, instituted in 1919, was suspended at the end of 1923. For several years the national confederation of workers' syndicates administered such exchanges, but the increasing unemployment made imperative the restoration of a state system. In December, 1927 communal employment offices, directed by commissions of employers and employees under the control of the local fascist organization, were inaugurated. These agencies have the exclusive privilege of placing workers.[42] All unemployed workers are required to register;

42 Special national and inter-provincial agencies for the placement of workers in the wheat,

workers accepting employment offered through any other intermediary are subject to heavy fines.[43] Unemployed members of the fascist party are given preference in placement.[44]

Since 1928 municipal officials have been authorized to expel from the towns and send back to their native communities all unemployed workers who have no immediate prospect of employment. There is obviously less concern about the presence of unemployed in the country than in the cities.

The government has attempted to control internal seasonal migration of workers by establishing a special Commissariat for Internal Migration and Colonization. Employment contracts are fixed under the supervision of this authority and workers are prevented from going to districts where no employment is to be had. Firms responsible for executing state-subsidized works must request the labor exchanges to supply the workers needed, and the Commissariat may require that a certain quota of such laborers be immigrants from other provinces.[45]

The fascist authorities have also resorted to the "tax in workers" (*imponibile di mano d'opera*) as a method of combating unemployment in certain of the northern provinces. This "tax," which consists in obliging agricultural employers, under the terms of collective contracts, to employ a minimum number of workers per unit area of their cultivated land, had been developed in the north on a large scale by the radical workers' unions in the years of widespread unemployment before and immediately after the War. The "tax" principally served the purpose of rationing jobs among a large number of workers who otherwise would have been unemployed. Agriculturalists found this an irksome burden, and for a time after the institution of the fascist régime it appeared that it might be dropped altogether. But the urgencies of unemployment have forced the fascists to maintain it, though without enthusiasm, and less effectively than in the

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rice and olive harvests have also been set up. In practice it seems that the employment system is decidedly less effective in the south than in the north. For further information on the exchanges see A. Oblath, "La lutte contre la chômage en Italie," *Revue Internationale du Travail,* May 1930, pp. 707-13; E. Campese, *Il fascismo contro la disoccupazione* (Rome 1929), pp. 79-145.

43 But it appears that many workers do not register for fear of being deported to their home communities.

44 A law of March 5, 1935 introduced the *libretto di lavoro,* an employment book containing information on the worker's past record, war service, fascist affiliations, education, etc. Each employed person must have such a book, and those not in possession thereof may not be registered by the employment exchanges.

45 The seasonal migration of agricultural workers from one province to another is large, although not so great as before the World War. (It amounted to 559,000 persons in 1910, and has averaged about 260,000 annually in 1929-34.) Laborers migrating for the wheat harvests in the north and in Sicily, and for the weeding and harvesting of rice in the north comprise the bulk of this movement. (See R. Africano, "Lo sviluppo delle migrazioni interne e la politica di ruralizzazione," *Rivista di Politica Economica,* March 31, 1935; Commissariato per le Migrazioni e la Colonizzazione Interna, *Le Migrazioni Interne, 1934* (Rome 1935.)

past. The burden of the "tax" is not so heavy as it was in the years immediately following the War; employers may accept the obligatory employment in those months when they are particularly in need of labor, rather than in the slack season; furthermore, they are permitted to select the individuals to be employed, thus diminishing the rationing value of the system for the unemployed workers in general.[46]

During the period of depression an extensive public works program —road building, land reclamation, reforestation, construction of buildings, aqueducts and the like—has been undertaken. State expenditures for this purpose have averaged about 2,000 million lire per year since 1930, declining in 1934-5 and being drastically reduced in 1936. The total number of days of work thus provided is, in millions: 1931, 39; 1932, 42; 1933, 51; 1934, 45; 1935, 39.[47] This has meant an absorption of not more than 20% of all unemployed workers, a small proportion becoming constantly smaller.

In recent years the Commissariat for Internal Migration and Colonization has also endeavored to settle permanently agricultural workers and their families on reclaimed lands and in the colonies. So far, however, this has been of slight significance. The total number of families established in internal zones (largely in the Agro Pontino, near Rome, in Venetia, Emilia, Lombardy and Sardinia) during the years 1930-34 was only 5,481, comprising 43,236 persons. The settlement of families in the African colonies has been insignificant.[48] Migration to foreign countries, permanent or temporary—formerly the most important means of reducing the pressure of population on the country's slender resources—has fallen off very markedly since the War, not only because of restrictions imposed abroad, but also because of the hostile attitude of the fascist government to permanent emigration.[49] Emigrant remittances have declined correspondingly and the

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46 For instance, the average minimum number of workers to be employed per 100 hectares of farm land in eight localities of the Po region in 1920-21 was 32.8; in 1931-32 it was 27.7. P. Albertario, "L'imponibile di mano d'opera nell'economia agraria del bassopiano lombardo," *Giornale degli Economisti . . .*, December 1932. See also Haider, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-11; *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* (cited), pp. 116-17.

47 *Annuario Statistico, 1935,* p. 327; *1936,* p. 199. Outlays for military purposes since 1930 have been more than double those for public works.

48 Commissariato . . . , *op. cit.*, p. cii. For these purposes of internal and external colonization the Commissariat pays settlement bonuses and helps to defray costs of travel and of land improvement.

49 In the period 1901-13 the average annual number of emigrants from Italy was 627,000. Since 1922 it has declined as follows (annual averages): 1922-24—345,000; 1925—257,000; 1928-30—193,000; 1931-33—111,000. (*Annuario Statistico, 1935,* p. 42.) The rural population supplied a smaller proportion of the emigrants since the World War than before. Most of the recent emigration has been to continental European countries, consisting particularly of temporary migration. For discussions of fascist emigration policy see A. Oblath, "Italian Emigration and Colonization

decline seriously affects the financial condition of many families.[50]

Distress among unemployed workers is also relieved to a slight extent through distribution of relief in particularly depressed areas by syndicates.

d) *Social Insurance and Social Welfare Institutions.* Agricultural workers, although not insured against unemployment, have been entitled since 1917 to benefits in case of accident, since 1919 to old age and invalidity pensions, and since 1927 to insurance against tuberculosis.[51] These schemes are supported by compulsory contributions from employers as well as workers. Benefits in all cases are quite small.[52] In addition to the government supported insurance systems, the syndical organizations sometimes provide for further aid through the establishment of sickness funds. Some observers have grave doubts about the actual effectiveness of the insurance system, at any rate in the south.[53] The funds of the insurance institutions have been tapped increasingly by the government as a convenient and not unimportant source of credit. Only a fraction of the receipts in recent years have been paid out as benefits to the insured.

The fascist government has fostered the development of a number of institutions concerned with "social welfare," education, recreation and propaganda. From the standpoint of the rural population the most important of these are the *Balilla* and *Dopolavoro* organizations, the National Institution for Maternity and Infancy, the *Patronato Nazionale,* and the National War Veterans' Society. The *Opera Nazionale Balilla* provides for the physical, military and patriotic education of children and

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Policy," *International Labour Review,* June 1931, pp. 805-34; Campese, *op. cit.,* p. 249, ff.; G. Salvemini, "Can Italy Live at Home," *Foreign Affairs,* January 1936.

50 Remittances to Italy are estimated to have fallen 75% from 1919 to 1932. (Cf. A. Nicolai, *Les remises des emigrants italiens*—Nice 1935—p. 150, ff.)

51 According to recent press reports a system of contributory maternity insurance, which has been available to industrial women workers, will shortly be extended to agriculture. Some 600,000 rural women are expected to participate in the scheme. (*Giornale d'Italia,* July 28, 1936.)

52 All workers and share-tenants are insured against occupational accidents. In case of accidental death, the survivors receive 6,000-8,000 lire; in case of 90% disability, an indemnity of 5,000-6,000 lire is paid; temporary disability is indemnified by a daily allowance of 3-4 lire. Wage-workers and *compartecipanti* are entitled to old age and invalidity pensions; share-tenants have been excluded since 1923. The pensions are based on the amount of contributions by the insured and his employer. In 1928-32 the average old-age pension was 700-1000 lire per year; the average invalidity pension was 600-1000 lire. Granting of the pensions is made the occasion of patriotic celebrations by the fascists. Contributions for accident insurance are paid entirely by employers; those for old age, invalidity and tuberculosis insurance are divided equally between employers and workers. (Information from the national institutions for social insurance; International Labour Office, *Industrial and Labour Information,* June 18, 1934, p. 412.)

53 The operation of the insurance systems in the agricultural field has left much to be desired; too frequently payments of contributions have been evaded; it is difficult to keep account of the insured workers; many workers and peasants are imperfectly informed about the nature of the benefits. (Cf. R. Roberti, "Lo sviluppo delle assicurazioni sociali in agricoltura," *La Terra,* May 1933.)

young persons. It has a pronounced military, nationalistic character, and aims to instill in the youth a devotion and obedience to the fascist system. The *Dopolavoro* concerns itself with education, sport and recreation for workers. The maternity and infancy organization is intended to assist mothers during and after child-birth, and to protect infants of poor mothers. The *Patronato Nazionale* gives free assistance to workers involved in social insurance controversies, and also assists insured persons in claiming their rights to benefits. Finally, the *Opera Nazionale dei Combattenti,* originally organized at the end of the War, provides for the economic welfare of World War veterans. This society has acquired particular prominence by reason of its supervision of land reclamation projects and its acquisition of land for settlement by ex-service men and their families.[54]

These institutions doubtless make contributions towards the general welfare, but they are probably more significant as potent agencies for the dissemination of fascist propaganda. However, they appear to be less effective in the country than in the cities. Some writers insist that their services constitute an important addition to the real income of the rural population. Closer examination of rural living standards in recent years and of the welfare organizations' activities (particularly in the south) suggest that such opinion must be heavily discounted.

e) *Labor Disputes.* As noted above, since 1926 all disputes between employers and workers must first be referred to a mechanism of conciliation, and then, if not thus settled, must be submitted to special courts for compulsory arbitration. Resort to any other method for settling labor disputes is illegal.[55] During the eight years 1927-34, 629 disputes relating to terms of collective contracts were submitted to the Ministry of Corporations for conciliation; 81 involved agricultural agreements. Of these 81 disputes, 66 were settled, 11 were not settled, and 4 were dropped or held up. To November, 1933, 14 disputes involving collective contracts had been settled by the labor courts; 2 of these related to agriculture.[56] The number of labor disputes concerning individuals alone has been very large, and has tended to increase.[57] This probably is an indication of the

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54 It may acquire land in certain circumstances by expropriation; such lands are leased on easy terms or sold to veterans. The O.N.C. has administered peasant settlements in several newly reclaimed areas, most notably in the Agro Pontino.

55 However, strikes are not entirely unknown; there were 56 in agriculture during 1927-33.

56 *International Labour Review,* October 1934, pp. 509-28; Istituto Centrale di Statistica . . . , *Bollettino Mensile di Statistica,* July 1935, p. 548.

57 The number of individual complaints in all industries has averaged nearly 200,000 for the past several years. In 1935 there were 103,656 complaints concerning agricultural workers. The syndicate organization settled 59,717 of these in favor of the complainants, and 2,254 unfavorably.

extent to which contracts are violated. It would seem that, given the present system of labor organization and extensive unemployment, a worker who has suffered what he believes to be a breach of his contractual working conditions would hesitate before making a complaint. Probably only the bolder or more desperate workers would decide to denounce violations of which they have been the victims.

It is interesting to note the tendencies reflected in the decisions of the labor courts. In the few cases involving agricultural collective contracts which have been decided by the courts the procedure was virtually the same: first, the employers' syndical organization demanded a reduction in wages; then the workers' syndical officials offered to accept a reduction, but not so great as that desired by the employers; and finally the courts either fixed the reduction at the level suggested by the workers' officials, or else compromised between their proposal and that of the employers.[58] In view of the identity of the political controls over the courts and the syndical organizations, the court verdicts cannot be other than a formal registration of decisions made in higher quarters. However, fascist commentators pretend to take seriously the activities of the labor courts, and point to them as an example of "class collaboration in practice."

"Deproletarization"—Theory and Practice

A cardinal goal in the avowed social-economic policy of the fascist régime is *sbracciantizzazione,* or "deproletarization," of the agricultural masses. According to the leading agricultural economist of fascism, "it is morally, politically and economically necessary to develop stable relationships between the worker and the land that he cultivates. . . . Thus we can have in the country, not nomadic casual laborers, forever uncertain of the next day, forever agitated in the search for a higher wage rendered illusory by uncertain employment, but *genuine peasants attached to the soil,* loving the soil, *who do not ask the impossible, who know how to content themselves,* certain in any case of the necessities of life."[59] The ideal of the old socialist movement is declared to have been destruction of small, individual proprietorship and share-tenancy and development of a proletarian army of landless workers. Fascism must seek the opposite

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The labor magistrates settled 4,066 favorably and 162 unfavorably. Over 37,000 complaints were abandoned or remained unsettled. (Source: Istituto Centrale di Statistica.)

58 For further details, see G. Salvemini, *Under the Axe of Fascism* (cited), p. 204, ff.

59 Arrigo Serpieri (former Under-Secretary for Land Reclamation) in a speech to the Corporation of Agriculture. Cf. Serpieri, *La legge sulla bonifica integrale nel primo anno di applicazione* (Rome 1931), pp. 229-30. (Italics by C.T.S.)

goal, "because, as in France, landed property would always be saved by by the many little owners. . . ."[60]

According to official avowals this is to be achieved by "fixing the workers to the soil:" transforming day laborers into workers on long-time contracts and into *compartecipanti,* and expanding share-tenancy and small peasant proprietorship. In so far as practical the collective contracts are to provide for a greater proportion of wage payments in kind, and for the extension of share-cropping. "All the syndical corporative activities of the fascist workers' organizations, in all sectors . . . is directed towards this objective . . . to transform the proletarian who is not and cannot be nationalist, and even less fascist, into a type of artisan who can be made to feel the nature of property."[61] Peasant proprietorship is to be protected and extended by vigorous encouragement of production, and by making available to small colonists large areas of reclaimed land. Thus a premium is to be put on intensive peasant farming, and the extensively cultivated great estates will eventually, by necessity of market conditions, be split up. However, no program for the general expropriation of the *latifondisti* is involved, for property rights of all kinds will be respected. Only when the "social duty" imposed by property is neglected must the government expropriate in favor of those who will use the property in the public interest.

Doctrine and practice, however, have differed in important respects. "Deproletarization" has not led to a strengthening of existing small proprietorship, nor to a wider diffusion of land ownership. Rather, the fascist era has seen an extension of share-cropping and tenancy, increasing difficulties for peasant proprietors (especially in the south), and growing subordination of the rural masses to the interests of capitalistic agriculture.

To be sure, the occupational census data show a decline of nearly 2 millions in the number of wage-workers between 1921 and 1931. Even allowing for some exaggeration due to official and technical bias, it would appear that there has been an important decline in this category.[62] But the number of "operating owners" actually fell nearly half a million in

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60 A landowner in a discourse at the Convegno per la Bonifica Integrale, Florence, May 21-22, 1934. (Cf. *Atti della R. Accademia dei Geogorfili,* July-September, 1934, p. 440.)

61 Luigi Razza, *Atti* . . . (cited), p. 358.

62 The occupational data doubtless are subject to error because of the difficulty in classifying persons engaged in several occupations, such as men who cultivate a small farm of their own and also work for others, or women who are both housewives and wage-workers. (In this respect see the doubts raised by F. Coletti, in *Corriere della Sera,* December 25, 1932, regarding the great decline in wage-workers.) Political bias probably affects these data also. One need merely recall that it was in the interests of powerful political groups in 1921 to have evidence of a large mass of wage-workers, whereas the opposite was true in 1931.

the same period, and cash-tenants and share-tenants rose by less than 400,000. Many tenants who had become proprietors during and after the World War were forced by financial difficulties after 1926 to return to their former status. There is nothing to indicate that any significant number of former wage-workers are now tenants or proprietors.

The bulk of landed property, as noted before, is owned by relatively few persons. This concentration is probably less extreme than a generation ago—a consequence of the increase in small proprietorship in the decade 1915-25—but in more recent years peasant ownership has been decreasing.[63] Moreover, the widely heralded "social duties" of landed property have remained little more than rhetoric. Very few farms have been expropriated in the public interest, and the reclamation laws have not resulted in any appreciable splitting up of large estates.[64] Nor has there been any notable settlement of peasants on reclaimed lands. The Commissariat for Internal Migration and Colonization estimated that 11,400 families, comprising 85,000 individuals, were settled from 1929 to the end of October, 1935.[65] Obviously this does not go far, in terms of the large number of landless workers and the concentration of land ownership. The unfavorable repercussions of land reclamation on many poor peasants, particularly in the mountainous areas, must also be taken into account.

In so far as progress has been made in "fixing the workers to the land,"

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63 It is estimated that about 800,000 hectares passed into the hands of new peasant proprietors during and immediately after the War. There are no data on the extent of the decrease in small proprietorship during the last ten years. Observers are agreed, however, that the decrease has been marked, and is still continuing. (Cf. discussion by N. Mazzocchi-Alemanni, Convegno per la Bonifica Integrale, *Atti* . . .—cited—p. 391.)

64 Except in the Agro Pontino (an area of 70,000 hectares) there has been practically no expropriation for reclamation or transformation purposes. The National War Veterans' Society has made but moderate use of its expropriation privileges. Some 105,000 hectares were transferred to the society in the period 1919-36: of this, it acquired 64,000 by expropriation and the remainder by purchase and donation. (Information from the Under-Secretariat of Land Reclamation.) The voluntary sale of landed property for reclamation purposes has been difficult in recent years, for the land market is already heavily overloaded, and the government has been unable adequately to finance purchases. Occasionally landed proprietors have been inclined to take seriously the demagogy in regard to "social duties" and expropriation, but fascist syndicate leaders have been at pains to assure them that their lot really will not be an unhappy one. Thus, Luigi Razza (former president of the agricultural workers' confederation, later Minister of Public Works) found it necessary to point out in 1934: "We are so little against property that one of the fundamental characteristics of our agricultural policy is to make the disinherited also property owners, and the corporative system certainly is not state socialism. . . . This ought above all to reassure those who fear that corporatism is a kind of Trojan horse in the citadel of property, a horse whose inhabitants are the leaders of the workers' syndicates!" (Discussion in the Convegno . . . , *Atti* . . . cited, p. 385.)

65 Commissariat . . . , *op. cit.*, p. cii. This is less than 1% of the number of agricultural workers' families. The War Veterans' Society has had a prominent part in internal colonization, and many of the settlers have been ex-service men. Generally, the settlers are granted land on a share-tenant basis, with the opportunity of eventually becoming proprietors.

it has been mainly in the direction of furthering the practice of paying wages in kind and of extending the share-cropping system—additional factors in reducing the mobility and bargaining strength of the wage earners.

More and more frequently, when wages are cut, the reduction is made largely in the cash portion of the wage. Thus larger shares are paid in produce. The uncertainty of the wage earners' income is thereby increased. With respect to the products that he cannot consume directly he is exposed to all the usual market risks.[66]

But the tendency is to go further and to urge the wider adoption of the contract of *compartecipazione,* or share-cropping. As observed before, the cropper cultivates under the direction of the employer, has no independence in selection of the crops or method of work, and is subject to the employer's discipline. The cropper is therefore a dependent worker, paid in kind instead of in cash, with no guarantees as to income or working hours, and more firmly bound to the employer than the wage laborer. Indeed, the approach to serfdom is too close to have escaped the attention even of fascist writers.[67]

The fascist syndical leaders have pressed for an extension of this system. While much is said about the advantages it gives to the workers, such as greater security of income and an approach to independent ownership, it is clear that the interests of employers are not forgotten. It is no accident that this effort has occurred at a time of financial difficulty for landlords and employer farmers.[68] Furthermore, *compartecipazione* is

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66 In this respect Razza pointed out: "It is necessary to return to the ancient system. . . . The worker must have the pride of carrying home to his wife and children the fruits of his labor—bread, wine and condiments. And the agricultural employers thus need not run to the banks every week to get money for wage payments." (*Lavoro Agricolo Fascista,* September 20, 1931.) And a writer in *Popolo d'Italia,* April 7, 1929, declared that the payment of wages in money is "anti-economic, reminiscent of socialist and populist demagogy." The *Lavoro Agricolo Fascista* (October 6, 1929) reports a peasant as having declared in a meeting in Milan province: "The best system was that of abolishing all payments in kind and paying in cash every two weeks." Reply: "This proposition is an open contradiction of all the doctrine and practice of fascism."

67 Thus, a syndicate official has held that "fascist collaboration" is necessary to escape the risk of putting the workers at the mercy of the employers, of returning to feudal servitude. (A. Aimi, *Dalla scomparsa del salariato alla corporazione*—Mantua 1934—p. 11.) A speaker before a congress of Milanese workers said: "In not a few cases *compartecipazione* degenerates and comes to represent in the hands of less correct proprietors a means of imposing on the croppers heavy uncompensated burdens. . . . Who wonders then if . . . so many peasants and workers want payment in cash, considering it as a delivery from servitude?" (*Lavoro Agricolo Fascista,* May 21, 1929.) For fascist expositions see A. Aimi, *op. cit.,* and *Verso la scomparsa del salariato* (Mantua 1933); A. Pagano, *Le compartecipazioni agricole del Mantovano* (Milan 1933).

68 Share-cropping is spoken of as providing low-cost labor. "Fortunately this disparity [between rigid wages and falling agricultural prices] was notably diminished by the wide extension of remuneration based on participation by the worker in the product or on payment in kind." (Serpieri and Mortara, "Politica Agraria Fascista," *Annali di Economia,* June 1934, p. 258.)

declared to be "a safeguard for the land itself against the risks of sudden convulsion and upheaval."[69]

In other respects, impossible to detail here, practice has been unfaithful to formal avowals. Fascist agricultural policy—as exemplified, for instance, in the subsidization of various types of production (including the "battle of wheat"), in programs of land reclamation, agricultural credit, marketing, cooperation, in the settlement of various problems of land tenure—has operated predominantly in the interests of large and medium landed property, commercialized agriculture and finance capital. It has been inimical to the great mass of poor peasants and agricultural workers. For them the masquerade of "deproletarization" and "ruralization" has meant further subjection to the propertied groups. All authentic labor organization has been shattered. The bureaucratic syndical system is essentially an instrument of mass control in the hands of a political party that operates in the service of the great landed and industrialist interests. In consequence, many of the gains in working conditions achieved by the labor movement before and after the World War have been lost. Practical reflection of this is a marked decline in mass living levels.[70]

At the same time it must be recognized that fascism undoubtedly has been able to base itself upon considerable popular support. Its emotional appeal and systematic control of the mental life of the nation have not been without effect. Most serious of all for the Italian people are the intellectual and moral stultification inevitable in such control, and the barriers that it throws in the way of the construction of a more rational society.

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69 Ministry of Corporations, *News Notes on Fascist Corporations,* September 1932. On March 25, 1930 the Fascist Grand Council, in considering the situation of the agricultural workers of the Po basin, recommended that share-cropping contracts be adopted as far as possible. The confederations of agricultural workers and employers signed an accord on October 25, 1934 which provides, among other things, for the substitution wherever possible of share-cropping for wage contracts; and where this is impractical, for increased payment of wages in kind. Again, on December 23, 1935 the two confederations agreed to develop collective contracts of *compartecipazione* in Sicily. (Cf. *News Notes on Fascist Corporations,* September 1932, December 1934, January 1936.) Statistics on share-cropping are not available, but it is growing.

70 Evidence of this is provided by food consumption data. Since 1930 both the quantity and quality of food available per capita have fallen appreciably. Most notable is the reduced consumption of wheat, meat products, sugar and olive oil. A sharp drop in salt consumption suggests that less cooked food is being eaten. It is to be observed that even in the best times the diet of the Italian rural population has been inadequate. Housing and sanitary conditions, too, are deplorable in many districts. Cf. *Annuario Statistico, 1935,* pp. 164-65; F. Bottazzi, A. Niceforo and G. Quagliariello, *Documenti per lo studio della alimentazione della popolazione italiana nell'ultimo cinquantennio* (Naples 1933); Confederazione Fascista dei Lavoratori della Terra, *Per le case rurali* (Rome 1934). Certainly, Italy's economic difficulties in recent years are connected in part with the general depression in capitalist countries. But recession began in Italy already in 1927. Moreover, to point, as many fascists do, to factors in the world depression as an explanation of the Italian difficulties is not consistent with the claim that fascism represents a new social and economic order, different from and not subject to the defects of capitalism.

Marxism and Values

BY SIDNEY HOOK

THAT all Marxists are socialists but that not all socialists are Marxists is a proposition which has been obvious since the days when Marx and Engels criticized socialists of other schools. This obvious truth may be taken as a point of departure to introduce a brief discussion of the relation between facts and values from a Marxist point of view. We call this truth obvious because there have been and are socialists who definitely repudiate Marxism but there has never been a group of Marxists, either self-avowed or characterized as such by others, who have rejected socialism. To be sure, certain special doctrines which Marxists hold are shared by individuals who are not socialists and who are even opposed to socialism. But this no more makes them Marxists than knowledge of the truths of biology makes a man a physician. For the Marxist is committed to a certain activity and program, a certain set of social purposes and values, in behalf of which his knowledge is to be applied. What is the relation between this knowledge and these values?

Socialists are people who believe that socialism is *desirable*. Marxists not only believe that socialism is desirable but accept a whole body of doctrine pertaining to the historic and economic conditions under which socialism can be realized and the means which must be employed in order to realize it. This body of doctrine is a more or less systematic set of propositions which assert matters of *fact* and justify predictions concerning the occurrence or non-occurrence of future events. Socialists may hold that socialism is desirable and yet maintain that any particular Marxist doctrine or all of them may be false. Marxists believe both in the truth of their doctrines and in the desirability of the socialist ideal.

The first question we must ask is whether the desirability of socialism is deducible from the truth of any or all of the Marxist doctrines. A moment's reflection is sufficient to show that on the basis of statements of fact alone nothing can be inferred about the desirability of present or future policy. Ideals and allegiances express committments not summaries of states of affairs. Even if the Marxist doctrine is interpreted in such a

way that the advent of socialism is asserted to be inevitable, whatever that may mean, another judgment is required before the inevitable is declared desirable. We do not always reconcile ourselves to events from which we cannot escape. Indeed, some people are so organized that the belief in the inescapability of an event occasionally is a psychological ground for regarding it as undesirable. We may agree that such romantic attitudes are unwise and even deplorable but our agreement is itself an illustration of a judgment of value which is in no way entailed by the consequences of our observations of fact.

Now sometimes it does appear as if the actual confirmation of a statement of fact or of a prediction about the future clinches an argument and leads to a judgment about the desirability of socialism. But when this is so it will always be the case that some common values are presupposed as desirable by both disputants and the question at issue turns out to be one concerning means and instrumentalities. For example, if peace between nations is considered to be the be-all and end-all of social life, then a demonstration of the fact that all modern wars are a result of the conflict between capitalist powers in quest of higher returns on their investment, together with the absence of any plausible reason for believing that under socialism conflicts between groups and nations will be negotiated by force of arms, would seem to necessitate a belief in the desirability of socialism. (A further factual assumption, of course, would be that there is no third alternative to capitalism and socialism.) But the major premise in every such argument is a judgment of value. It is of these values, Bertrand Russell has recently written, that science has nothing to say.[1]

None the less, although the doctrines entertained by Marxists and the socialist ideals espoused by them are not *logically* bound up with each other, there does exist some significant connection between them. For the Marxist the affirmation of the socialist ideal is made in the context of a scientific study of society, its productive possibilities, and the social and human costs involved in its realization. The Marxist rejects Henri De Man's easy formula "socialism is a passion not a cognition" because it does not do justice to the *interplay* between knowledge and values—an interplay which must be accepted as an empirical fact no matter how difficult it is theoretically to account for it. There is all the difference in the world between a "passion" formulated independently of knowledge and judgment and incapable of being appraised except by another "passion," and a "passion" which is fortified by the relevant knowledge of its sphere of application, the chances of its success and the consequences of action in its

1 Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science* (New York 1935), p. 223.

behalf. In the first case it is even questionable whether we can speak of a judgment being involved; in the second it is indisputably present. Marxists have criticized non-Marxist socialism not because of its interest in ideals and morality but because of the abstract character of its morality. The history of non-Marxist socialism reveals a succession of *unhistorical* moral ideals—Kantian categorical imperatives, extensions of the social principles of Christianity, or apotheoses of the good, true and beautiful *überhaupt.* Marxist socialism claims to be a scientific morality because it relates the socialist ideal to the historic facts at hand, to the needs of the working masses and the probable outcome of the pursuit of alternative ideals.

When it is said that Marxism is a scientific morality something more is meant than that it can give a scientific account of morals. A scientific account of morals would begin with an analysis of the types of customary judgments of approbation and disapprobation in a community and then attempt to establish reliable correlations between them and some other relatively independent aspect or aspects of social life. For Marxists, morals like any other part of culture, say law, art, educational theory and practise, is a function of a complex of material factors, of varied weight, *e.g.* geography, mode of production, class interests, etc. We may even be able to predict within limits the general character of the morals of a class if we know the past history of the society of which it is a part and the role which it plays within the processes of production. A scientific account of morals in its most developed form can consist only of hypothetical propositions asserting that if such and such a situation is present this or that will be declared desirable. These propositions are of the same class as propositions of all other sciences and their mode of verification is the same.

But a scientific morality differs from a scientific account of morals somewhat in the way in which actual *choosing* differs from the alternatives as *possible* choices. The conclusions of scientific morality are normative and practical: they assert that something *should* be done; that socialism is a valid ideal to be realized here and now. The whole incidence of the Marxist position is not hypothetical, although it embraces a great many hypothetical propositions, but practical. It does not deduce the desirability of its goal from its theoretical doctrines; it employs its theoretical doctrines as tested instruments to achieve its goal: in the process both the instruments and the goal receive their test. The realism of the Marxist, since it always involves an explicit (or implicit) and active preference for one of a number of conflicting values, is something more than the "objectivity" of the pure social scientist. He does not stop with the assertion that "if such and such a situation takes place, then it will in all probability be followed by such and such," for according to his own theory one of the

conditions which must be fulfilled before socialism can be realized is the presence of a political group with an appropriate program and will to action. And whether or not this latter condition is fulfilled or not depends upon what Marxists do or leave undone, something which cannot be inferred from their knowledge of social facts and laws alone. For the possession of knowledge is compatible with diametrically opposed modes of conduct. Granted, for example, that the tendency of capitalist production to increase the number of unemployed and unemployable is objectively verifiable, and universally confirmed by all qualified investigators: we can no more deduce from this a universally acceptable program of action than we can determine from the objective properties of steel whether to build tanks or tractors.

Does this mean that any judgment concerning the desirability of socialism is therefore arbitrary and irrational? That conflicting judgments of value are of equal worth?

Several answers have been made. One of them attempts to cut the Gordian knot by maintaining that, properly speaking, judgments of value are no judgments at all. They are literally expressions of emotion. They show what we feel in the same way as a clenched fist or sneer; there is, therefore, no more sense in calling them "true" or "false," "valid" or "invalid" than there is in applying these terms to other expressions of emotion. Although expressed in sentence form, judgments of value are not really propositions, for they say nothing, predict nothing, imply nothing. Consequently they are no more verifiable than cries of pain.[2] It follows from this that there can really be no dispute about judgments of value, appearance to the contrary notwithstanding. This answer is inadequate for at least two reasons. First, if it be true, then, as those who believe it grant, it should be the case that all ethical disputes are disputes about questions of fact or questions of logic. But there are situations in which we are agreed about the facts and about the implications of two alternative courses of action and yet different judgments of value are made. The judgments of value are none the less "judgments" even though they may be inarbitrable. That they are judgments is perhaps due to the circumstance that they express an emotion or passion *after* questions of fact and logic have been explored. Secondly, feeling can be expressed not only in judgments of value but in cries, groans, reflexes as well. It is an empirical fact, however, that some expressions of feeling are modifiable by *rational* discussion while some are not. The distinction between these varying modes of expression is not explained by reducing them all to one category; and the empirical fact that

2 A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (London 1936), pp. 161 ff.

judgments of value are often affected by reflection and critical inquiry cannot be ignored.

A more traditional and widespread answer is that all judgments of value express claims and that the only basis for determining which claims are justified where they conflict, is in terms of their relative strength. On this view the ideals of socialism and the ideals of fascism, since they cannot be declared to be true or false by reference to facts, are to be judged right or wrong by reference to whether they prove to be strong or weak. Might not only determines what will be considered right but is synonymous with right. An interesting feature about discussions of the doctrine that might makes right is that many who believe that they are contesting this view reaffirm it in another form. For example, those who assert that custom determines right, or the interests of the majority, or positive law, *i.e.* the law which is enforced by the courts, accept the principle in question. Now *formally,* like the philosophy of extreme solipsism, such a position is irrefutable in case any one flees to it for ideological protection. But as in the case of solipsism, there is overwhelming empirical evidence that no one really believes the doctrine professed. And the proof is to be found in the fact that no matter how hard-boiled the identification of the *is* and the *ought-to-be* sounds, it is always possible to find some situation in which the proponent of the thesis must recognize in his own behavior, verbal or non-verbal, a distinction between the concepts of might and right. Any theory, therefore, according to which "right" and "triumphant might" are interchangeable terms, turns out to be a nominal definition, and must be rejected as inadequate for an understanding of ethical behavior.

A third answer is sometimes given by non-Marxist socialists who maintain that values are fact of a "higher" non-empirical order, hierarchically organized in terms of lesser and greater worth, and that human beings possess a special organ of apprehension or intuition which enables them to see that the set of values symbolized by the term socialism is superior to the values symbolized by fascism. It is held that a non-empirical theory of the good is the only possible alternative to the doctrine that might and right are the same. The difficulties with this view are briefly: (1) it involves not merely a non-empirical ethics but a non-empirical psychology; (2) it fails to explain the enormous diversity of *intuitions* of value and prepares the way for a "might makes right" doctrine in transcendental dress; (3) it fails to account for the fact that often two parties to a dispute seem to hold the same values in common; (4) it offers no explanation of the fact that when difficult value judgments are involved these can often be significantly correlated with differences in social status and interests.

It is clear, then, that Marxists cannot eschew the term right or judg-

ments of value without abandoning their program and ultimately their very movement. Indeed, to do so is to play into the hands of their enemies whose chief rhetorical stock in trade is the danger which Marxism represents to the values of Western culture. Nor, it is clear, can Marxists consistently with their own activity defend any variant of the might is right doctrine, for almost always and everywhere they are weaker than their opponents. Nor can they resort to the realm of eternal values subsisting in their own rights in some transcendental sphere. And, as we already saw at the outset, they cannot *logically* deduce the desirability of socialism.

"Is there anything they can believe?" the reader by this time is impatiently asking. The answer I wish to suggest as a basis for further discussion is that although the value judgments of Marxism cannot be *deduced* from facts, they are not arbitrary or irrational. For the *method* by which they are reached bestows upon them the character of rationality even though they are rooted in human needs, preferences and interests. This method is critical, historical and experimental. It begins by tracing the biological, psychological and social needs which are articulated in judgments of value. It concretizes the formulations so reached by relating them to the specific historical situation of a given economy, analyzing the way in which new needs arise and the distinctive way in which traditional needs are expressed. It studies the extent to which both types of needs are frustrated by existing social relations and canvasses the possibilities at hand for liberating and liberalizing them. It continues its survey by exploring the paths of action which must be taken to realize the social conditions necessary to gratify these needs and the probable consequences of such action. In all of this, we are dealing with propositions whose consequences are such that we can scientifically confirm or invalidate them. The genuine scientific judgment of *value* is one made after the above process of inquiry has been completed. It differs from ordinary judgments in that it expresses, to be sure, a volition; it differs from ordinary volitions in that it is a volition based on, even if not deducible from, reflection. It is volition conscious of itself, responsible, and free, not in the sense of uncaused, but in that it exhibits what we are and what we wish to become. Knowledge, on the Marxist view, makes a difference to values and the action guided by values even though more than knowledge is involved in every situation in which values are found. In this way Marxism mediates between the rationalist and non-rationalist traditions of European philosophy.

We are now in a position to understand how Marxists combine the elements of naturalism and rationalism in their theory of morality. In any given society there is always some conflict as to what objects and modes of behavior are genuine values; or when the same objects are regarded as

values there are always different patterns or combinations of values opposed to each other. What gives these objects a claim to value is their relation to some interest or need. Where interests conflict there will always be found a conflict in value judgments. In this conflict, Marxists assert that their values are "valid" in virtue of the scientific study of the interests at the basis of these values and the possibilities of gratifying, by social change and the frustration of *some* of the interests of those who oppose socialism, the interests of progressively wider groups of the population including those who are now opposed to socialism. There is no guarantee that the scientific analysis of values in this sense will lead everyone to the same judgment of value. But without this antecedent analysis no judgment of value, whether it be socialist or non-socialist, is really a judgment. It is a brute event on the same plane as a reflex movement. The antecedent scientific analysis may lead to disparate judgments of value. In such cases both value claims are equally valid. In most social situations, however, the desire to test judgments of value by the method described above is far from being universal. To-day, for example, no ideologist of fascism, for all his rhetorical emphasis upon values, attempts critically to investigate the relation between his values, the social situation whose conflicts have led to the assertion of these values, and the social and personal consequences of the activities set up by these values. Honor, dignity, order, sacred egoism, unity, racial purity are unanalyzed phrases which function in the writings and speeches of the fascists merely as symbols of persuasion. The scientific method of analyzing and testing judgments of value is ruled out at the very start as irrelevant. Yet without employing such a method it can be said that the individual, in an important sense, does not *know* what he wants or what his values are. The refusal to adopt a rational method of testing one's values is itself a *judgment* of value only when the method is submitted to analysis and contrasted with other possible modes of procedure.

The question is usually asked, however, whether this whole method of testing values is not an elaborate form of circular reasoning. Granted that we have reflected upon the causes, social context and consequences of our judgments of value, must we not be in anterior possession of some standard of what is desirable or preferable in order to test our judgment? And if so how is this standard validated? The response must be that we certainly confront experience with a standard—indeed, with many standards—but this standard can only claim to be a valid one when it is *reaffirmed* in the process of critical, scientific inquiry. In every moral situation we have as part of the given data an entire set of values taken over from tradition, habit and the outcome of previous moral situations. The evaluation of the relevant alternatives in terms of prospective consequences enables us to

test afresh the values we accept as data and sometimes to discover new ones. Scientific deliberation, therefore, makes it possible to check the desirability of what we want by the consequences of our wanting and getting: in the light of these consequences we can determine which of the values and standards originally approved in the situation are ultimately approved. Our ultimate preferences are not "true" or "false" but this does not mean that they are irrational, for when we say that they are ultimate in the above sense we mean (1) that they have been influenced by relevant knowledge of what is true or false, (2) they express a decision which extends over a determinate and calculable period of time, and (3) that they affirm the means and costs necessary to give them effect. Further, values and standards are ultimate but never final, for their ultimacy is a function of particular historic situations, and as these change values and standards change. The morality of Marxist socialism, therefore, is an historical morality which admits of ultimate values but not of final or eternal ones.

An important implication of the foregoing is that all social ideals must sooner or later be tested by the consequences of the set of social institutions which embody them. If a scientific morality is possible only when judgments of value have been subjected to critical analysis, then only a society whose institutions permit and encourage the widest possible use of free and critical intelligence can build up a scientific social morality. The use of scientific method is not a guarantee that a common social morality will ever be achieved even under socialism. That depends upon the extent to which the basic needs and interests of men are the same or become the same. Where as a result of the functioning of socialist institutions oppositions of need and interest do arise, a scientific social morality makes it *possible* that arrangements can be instituted to convert value conflicts into value differences. Socialism, democracy and scientific method, therefore, are indissolubly connected. Neither one can fully come into its own without the others.

The American Revolution: Economic Aspects[1]

BY LOUIS M. HACKER

1. Colonial Agriculture

At the outbreak of the American Revolution the great majority of the American population—perhaps nine-tenths of it—was engaged on the land. The owning farmers, whether they were planter lords or modest family farmers, were commercial agriculturists: for either they produced cash crops for sale in a market or they developed subsidiary activities to net them a money return. Self-sufficiency, even on the frontier, is impossible under capitalist organization. Cash is needed everywhere, whether it is to pay taxes or for harvesting the crop or to buy salt, iron and a squirrel gun. Hence, the colonial farmer either produced a cash crop or he tried to find employment among a number of occupations that did not interfere with his agricultural activities. He either trapped or hunted; or worked in logging operations; or shipped with a fishing fleet. Often he really obtained his cash from land speculation: that is to say, as the result of constantly mounting land values, the farmer was in a position to sell his improved land and buy a cheaper farm in the frontier areas. Thus, the American farmer was a dealer in land from the very dawn of settlement until 1920, a period of three centuries. When land values began to decline after 1921, the basis of American agricultural well-being was shaken to its foundations.

This need to develop a cash crop made for the production of staples everywhere. By the eighteenth century New England was producing and sending to market beef, cattle and hogs, work animals and corn to be used for stall feeding. The Middle Colonies had become the great granary of the English settlements, and on the big farms of New York and Penn-

1 This is the first of a series of two articles. The second will be "The American Revolution: Social Aspects."

sylvania, where tenants and indentured servants were being employed, wheat was being grown, processed into flour and sold in the towns and the far away West Indies. In the Southern Colonies agriculture was the keystone of the whole economic structure: Virginia and Maryland planters grew tobacco for sale in England; interior farmers grew grains and raised cattle to be used in the West Indian trade; the tidewater planters of the Carolinas and Georgia cultivated and harvested rice, indigo and some cotton. These crops were sent to seaports, put on ships and carried to distant places to furnish those funds which were the basis of the commercial enterprise of the day.

Of the three agricultural regions, New England was the least important. Its soil and climate militated against the establishment of an intensive agriculture; but these obstacles could have been overcome—as they have in modern times—by the investment of capital in farming operations. Colonial merchants quickly discovered that returns were more successfully obtainable from shipbuilding, the carrying trade and land speculation: in these activities, therefore, they placed their capital funds building up large estates, as did the Narragansett planters in Rhode Island, only later and largely for their prestige value. Before the colonial period was over New England husbandry was producing meat and work animals for the West Indian markets; it could not, however, raise sheep because mercantilist bans on colonial manufactures prevented the growth of a local outlet for wool.

The New England countryside was dotted with small farms which in effect complemented and made possible the great variety of commercial pursuits its population conducted. New Englanders labored in the forests cutting masts and yards for ships; they caught and shot small fur-bearing animals and sold the skins and peltries; on the seacoasts they worked in shipyards and shipped as fishermen and seamen.

In the Middle Colonies, commercial agriculture was developed on a more significant scale. Farms were greater in size, soil and climatic conditions were more favorable, and the presence of a large landlord class encouraged the development of tenancy, the use of unfree labor and therefore the production of cash crops. The existence of markets, notably those of the sugar islands, gave spur to the appearance of capitalist agriculture in this region. As a result, during the eighteenth century, New York and Pennsylvania were producing large quantities of surplus grains which were being milled into flour and packed for export to New England, the West Indies, and occasionally to Great Britain and South Europe. The Middle Colonies also were raising beef and dairy cattle, hogs and work animals and entering them and their products into the foreign trade.

In the Southern Colonies, agriculture was on a commercial basis from the beginning. The plantation form of economy largely prevailed, although in the interior regions there were to be found many small independent farmers. On the plantations, tobacco, rice and indigo were being grown; in the back country the chief crops were tobacco, grains and cattle. However, tobacco was the great cash crop of Colonial America just as cotton was to become that of the Middle Period. With tobacco was intimately linked the plantation as an economic institution.

The plantation was not unique to colonial and slave America; it still exists today as a significant form of agricultural economic organization. The plantation system flourishes in those regions where land is relatively cheap and plentiful, where extensive rather than intensive operations can be carried on, and where a permanent labor supply can be collected and retained. Its leading hallmarks are the production of staples for a market and the investment of capital not so much in land and the improvement of its technics as in the maintenance of its labor force. Hence, plantations grow tobacco or cotton or rubber or tea; and they utilize an unfree labor force, whether its specific characteristic is indenture or slavery or peonage or share-cropping. Plantation agriculture, essentially, is an exploitative activity that appears in new countries where land is not restricted, liquid funds are relatively scarce and surpluses can be invested in a growing laboring group.

The plantation economy sprang up in colonial Virginia and Maryland, notably, for obvious reasons. The cultivation of a staple like tobacco served excellently the purposes of the Mercantilist System: it did not compete with an important English crop and hence might be grown on a grand scale; it produced a colonial return on the basis of which large English exports might be sent to the Southern Colonies; it furnished opportunities for the investment of English capital—short-term funds for the financing of the crops and long-term funds for the hypothecation of plantation properties; and it created an outlet for England's surplus populations. Thus tobacco cultivation was closely bound to English mercantilist policy.

The Southern landlord, functioning in the sphere of commercial capital relations, sooner or later branched off into a number of activities that were subsidiary to the plantation economy. He became interested in the fur trade, he raised livestock, he sold small necessaries to the Indians and he became a dealer in the wild lands of the western zones. These enterprises, notably the last, gave his operations a certain degree of elasticity: and when they were restricted he found himself in an unhappy economic position. For tobacco cultivation, as the eighteenth century advanced, undoubtedly was becoming increasingly unprofitable.

There was no question that the tobacco market kept on expanding: at the end of the seventeenth century Maryland and Virginia were exporting 35,000,000 pounds to the mother country; by 1763 the quantity had trebled. On the other hand, the industry was at the mercy of the imperial system. Tobacco was on the enumerated list and could be sent, therefore, only to England; high sumptuary taxes were placed on it; prices were controlled in London and tended to drop periodically below the cost of production. In addition, capital costs of plantation operation continued to mount, due to the high cost of labor (the price of indentured servants and, more particularly, that of slaves went up while their productivity remained constant), the exhaustion of the soil in the older regions, and the necessity on the part of the planters to buy new lands to which they could be ready to transfer their activities. The other charges against operations—of freight costs, insurance, merchants' commissions and profits, interest on borrowings—hung like millstones about the necks of the encumbered planters.

The plantation system was particularly dependent upon credit. The tobacco grower required credit to assist in the acquisition of the labor force; to market his cash crop; to furnish his equipment; and to finance his purchase of consumers goods. The only source of funds was the English merchant capitalist: and to him the Southern planter was compelled to pay high interest rates, mortgage his land and slaves and turn for the supplying of those necessaries without which his home and plantation could not continue. Constantly weighed down by debt, it was small wonder that the planters of Colonial America ever sought to expand their activities, by extending their tobacco lands and engaging in the more speculative aspects of land dealing; and that they turned to thoughts of inflation as relief from debt oppression was also to be expected.

Because the wild lands of the frontier areas were so important to the maintenance of the stability of the Southern planting economy, Southern capitalists were constantly preoccupied with them. The West was not opened up by the hardy frontiersman; it was opened up by the land speculator who preceded even the Daniel Boones into the wilderness. But the English (and also the Scotch) had also learned to regard with more than a curious interest these wild lands of the West: they saw in them profits from the fur trade and from the speculative exploitation of the region by their own capitalist enterprise. It was at this point that English and Southern merchant capital came into conflict; and when, as a result of the promulgation of the Proclamation Line of 1763 and the Quebec Act of 1774, the Western lands were virtually closed to colonial enterprising, the Southern planting economy began to totter. With-

out the subsidiary activity of land speculation, planters could not continue solvent; there is no cause for wonder, therefore, that the owners of great plantation properties should be among the first to swell the ranks of the colonial revolutionary host in 1775.

2. Other Fields of Production

Colonial producers and enterprisers engaged in all those other activities that are associated with a newly-settled region. The trapping and slaying of the wild animals of the forests early attracted pioneers and promoters; and the prevalence of the beaver, otter, mink, bear, racoon and fox in the New England and Middle Colonies and of the deer, racoon, fox and beaver in the Southern Colonies led to the creation of a thriving peltry and hide industry and trade. The English demand for furs and skins was constant, profits were great and quickly capitalism became interested and sought to monopolize the field. This it was not difficult to do, particularly when the lines of the traffic lengthened as the wild lands kept on receding beyond the tidewater settlements. English merchants and the great Southern and Northern landlords financed the individual hunters, trappers and traders, or employed them as their agents, and furnished the truck and firearms which served as the basis for the Indian barter. As the extermination of wild life went on, the keeping open of an ever-extending frontier zone became one of the necessities of the colonial economy: the struggle over the fur trade had involved England and France in the long series of colonial wars in America; and the desire to continue the fur traffic was one of the reasons for colonial interest in the wild lands beyond the crest of the Appalachians—and, hence, collision with the mother country.

In lumbering and in the production of forest products there also existed opportunities for colonial capitalist enterprise. The abundance of stands of white pine and oak in the North and of yellow pine in the South, the great need for timber and naval stores as the basis of the shipbuilding industry, and the wide uses to which wood was put for construction and cooperage, made lumbering an obvious field of interest for many elements of the colonial population. In the lumbering camps that sprang up near the many rivers of seabord America there were to be found opportunities for winter employment for farmers and their sons; and in the erection of sawmills and the carriage of the cut timber to markets merchants invested their funds and, indeed, by expanding their operations very quickly succeeded in driving small competitors out of business. On a modest scale, obviously, the sawmill industry in many regions began to partake of monopolist characteristics. These lumbering products were important articles

of commerce, the chief outlets being the sugar islands, Spain and Portugal.

Masts, spars, yards and planks were required in the making of ships; and so, also, were tar, pitch and turpentine, as well as those other ship necessaries, hemp for rope and flax for sailcloth. The English government, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, seeking to free itself of its dependence for these articles upon the Baltic countries and Russia, began to offer bounties and duty remissions for the colonial production of naval stores, hemp and flax and their shipment to England. In New England the mercantile traffic was too profitable to tempt capital into this field. But in the South, where the forests were so much greater and the production of naval stores and hemp could take place as a subsidiary enterprise of commercial agriculture, English policy met with a substantial success. In North and South Carolina the naval stores industry flourished and the growing of hemp and flax widely spread, penetrating even into the back country.

Utilizing the products of the forest and in response to the needs of fishermen and merchants, a thriving colonial shipbuilding industry sprang up. Merchant capital was closely joined to the carrying trade; and the expansion of trading relations on the part of England with the Orient and Africa and on the part of the American Colonies with Newfoundland, the West Indies, the wine islands and the Guinea coast gave spur to the building of ships at every coast town easily accessible to a timber supply. Shipyards, encouraged by the mother country, which exported the needed ironware and shipwrights, arose on the Massachusetts shore and at Philadelphia and New York, and, financed with British capital, by the opening of the Revolution were turning out almost all the ships needed by the American carrying trade and a large part of those employed by the British. The building of ships was one of the great outlets for New England and, later, Pennsylvania capital accumulations. Massachusetts, alone, between 1696 and 1713, produced at least 1118 vessels of 69,468 tons; during the second quarter of the century Philadelphia became the chief shipbuilding center of the colonies. So pressing was this colonial competition that the English industry exhorted Parliament to prohibit American shipbuilding, but without avail, so that by 1775, it has been estimated, 30% of the ships flying the British flag were built in American yards. American ships served another important economic function: they were a significant item in the balance of payments. Ship captains, after having sold their freights in England, the wine islands or the sugar islands, also disposed of the ships themselves at handsome profits and returned as supercargoes on the vessels that were carrying back to America the hardware and drygoods or rum, wine or hardwoods they had bought.

Not least among the fields cultivated by American enterprise were the fisheries. Starting originally and modestly as in-shore fishermen, the New England colonists were able to supplement their meager diets with the catches of cod, mackerel, haddock and halibut they found in such great quantites in the waters around Massachusetts. Operations were on a small scale and seamen participating in the industry shared with the owners of vessels in the profits of the catches. But as the New England fishermen were able to shake off the competition of the English in home waters and as they extended their activities farther and farther northward to the Newfoundland banks, the Nova Scotia coast and the St. Lawrence Gulf, the industry more and more began to attract a large capitalist interest. The outfitting of ships and curing and sale of the fish demanded liquid funds; and the supply of the growing market—to Southern Europe, Ireland and the wine islands which bought good fish, and to the sugar islands which bought the so-called refuse for their slaves—made links with big merchants imperative. These functions only a well developed merchant capital could perform; so that consolidation and control began to appear in the fisheries as it did in the fur industry. In 1765 more than 31,000 men were engaged on the New England fishery fleets; and more than 350 New England ships carried fish to the profitable markets of Southern Europe and the West Indies.

Whaling, by the opening of the eighteenth century, also began to take on significant proportions. Whales—particularly important for their blubber whose oil was the chief source of illuminants and lubricants—were hunted far out into the North Atlantic; and by 1770, in addition to supplying local needs, 4,000 tons of whale oil were being exported.

The mining and production of crude iron—of pigs and bars—appeared early in colonial America, when enterprisers in Massachusetts took to working bog deposits. Starting with the second decade of the eighteenth century, the industry took on new life; and, using English capital and slave labor, American owners of iron ore lands began to erect blast furnaces and forges in Western Virginia and Maryland. The Principio Company, organized in Maryland in 1724, in time was owning 30,000 acres of ore lands and numerous plants; at the outbreak of the Revolution, its properties were worth at least $500,000. Spreading into Pennsylvania and New Jersey, in the 1770's the colonial industry could claim more operating blast furnaces and forges and the production of more pigs and bars than could that of the mother-country. The role of foreign capital in this field was significant. When Baron Stiegel erected iron and glass works in Pennsylvania he did so with funds from Germany; and when Peter Hasenclever built iron furnaces and forges, and other plants, in New Jersey and New

York in the 1760's he was sinking more than £50,000 belonging to English investors.

The production of crude iron by the colonies England encouraged; but when colonials, instead of shipping their pigs and bars to the mother country, took to erecting rolling and slitting mills and plating forges—in short, turning the crude iron into nails and sheets—then the heavy hand of the Mercantilist System descended on this young industry. The Iron Act of 1750 put crude iron on a free list and forbade the further erection of wrought iron plants; in 1764 iron was included among the enumerated articles.

3. The Role of Manufactures

There existed no manufacturing, in the commercial or industrial sense, in colonial America: and in this fact we are to find one of the important keys to the outbreak of the American Revolution. Household manufacturing there was: the colonial farming households, particularly of the more modest sort and where the necessaries of indentured servants and Negro slaves were concerned, supplied many of their own needs. Food was prepared for home consumption: bread was baked, butter was churned, shoulders and hams were salted and smoked, fruits were dried, beer was brewed. Wool, flax, hemp and, in the South, cotton for clothing and home uses were carded, spun, woven and sometimes even rudely dyed. Leather was tanned and made into shoes, caps, gloves and rough workclothes. The wood lot furnished the timber for house and barn, shingles, furniture, carts, implement handles, casks and staves. Ashes were leached, soap was boiled, candles were molded, and kitchen utensils of wood, horn and gourd were devised. Sometimes working with his family, sometimes assisted by traveling artisans, the colonial farmer was able to fabricate many crude articles for his daily needs out of those raw materials that he had at hand. Occasionally a surplus of cloth, linen, butter or honey was taken to the local village and sold or exchanged for the salt, iron, paint and tools that were essential to the conduct of the household; for self-sufficiency, of course, was never fully attained.

This was not manufacturing in the capitalist sense. The conversion of raw materials into finished goods and their sale in large and distant markets, in modern times, has been under the supervision of two different types of organization. Sometimes found side by side but in the broad and abstract sense existing in a sequential relationship, these have been domestic manufacturing, or the putting-out system, and industrial manufacturing, or the factory system. Stated simply, the domestic system was that type of manu-

facture under which an intermediary, the merchant-manufacturer, who was more interested in commerce than in production, supplied the raw materials to independent artisans who, laboring in their own homes and possessing their own equipment, performed the processes of production. The finished goods were then taken over by the merchant-manufacturer who transported to and sold them in the markets he had developed. Associated more particularly with the manufacture of woolens, although it was to be found in many other industries, even in metal mining, the domestic system flourished generally in Western Europe in the period between the decline of the guilds and the appearance of the factory. It was controlled by the merchant capitalist: for he it was who had the liquid funds that made possible the financing of the various transactions involved in the gathering together of the raw materials, their manufacture and their sale. The producer, on the other hand, was not a wage laborer primarily. He owned his own workshop, which was his home; his loom, frames and tools, as the case might be; and his kitchen garden. When in addition to owning the wool, yarn, stuff and the shop in which it was sold the merchant-manufacturer came also to possess the looms and frames, then the transition was complete. In the words of Mantoux: "Thus the producer, gradually deprived of all rights of ownership over the instruments of production, had in the end only his labor to sell and his wages to live on." The movement of the expropriated producers into unified workshops, where they worked under discipline, and the more intensive division of labor completed the process.

The factory system was now in operation. Not necessarily associated with automatic machinery—for factories existed in Florence in the thirteenth century and in England as early as the fifteenth century—industrial manufacture was chiefly characterized by the separation of the producer from the instruments of production and the sale of his labor power for wages. The private and concentrated ownership of the fixed capital—workshop, equipment, tools—and the hiring of wage labor were its primary and unique attributes; in a secondary sense, it was distinguished by the specialization of functions, owner-management, rationalization of production, the greater circulation of capital, the more intensive organization of the market and, later, the introduction of power: and such was the factory system that began to supplant the domestic system in England in the middle of the eighteenth century and that became the distinguishing mark of industrial capitalism.

Neither of this type of manufacturing organization was to be found in colonial America. Why was this? Colonial America did not want for liquid capital: witness the extraordinary extension of capitalist enterprise,

the work of both English and American capitalists, in trade, shipbuilding, land speculation, the financing of the plantation system, and crude iron production. Colonial America had its fair share of wealthy men: as early as 1680, there were said to be at least 30 merchants in Massachusetts alone who were worth between $50,000 and $100,000. Thomas Amory, one of the greatest early colonial merchants, left an estate worth $100,000; Peter Faneuil, who died a generation later, left many times that amount. Every colony could boast of its big merchants, who were, in fact, capitalists; indeed, George Washington, the greatest of these, in the 1770's was calling himself not "planter" but "merchant." It did not want for the means of creating a free labor supply: the engrossing, or monopolization, of the lands in the settled areas had compelled small farmers either to become tenants or to move westward where they squatted on the wild lands held by absentee landlords. The frontier had not been made secure against the Indians because of the fur trade, and the necessity for maintaining tidewater land values; but had the owners of the wild lands so desired it, the pacification of the western areas would have driven the landless into domestic manufacturing or workshops. It did not want for a market: by 1770, concentrated in a relatively small area and excellently served by harbors and rivers, lived a population one-third as great as England's; too, the very rich market for finished goods of the sugar islands easily was capable of exploitation. It did not want for raw materials: for never was a land endowed with richer natural resources. Manufacturing did not appear in colonial America because the very nature of the Mercantilist System prohibited it.

4. The Prohibition of Manufactures

The English Mercantilist System, in its imperial-colonial relations, following the triumph of English merchant capital in the Puritan Revolution, was based on the economic subservience of the colonies. Indeed, every imperial and administrative agency had this end constantly in view: and most significant among these was the Board of Trade. The Board of Trade, in its final form, had been established in 1696, and, among its various instruments for control over the colonies, these three were notable: it had the right to deny charters or patents to English-financed companies seeking to engage in enterprises in the colonies which were inimical to the interests of home merchant capitalists; it had the power to review colonial legislation and recommend to the Privy Council the disallowance of such colonial enactments as ran counter to the welfare of the mother country; and it prepared specific instructions for the deportment of the royal gov-

ernors in the colonies, in particular indicating where the veto power was to be used to prevent colonial encroachments on the privileges and prerogatives of English citizens.

Ever vigilant, the Board of Trade proceeded against the colonies when they threatened to impinge on the interests of Englishmen: it refused to tolerate colonial interference with the mother country's hold on foreign trade and shipping; it checked colonial attempts to control the traffic in convicts and slaves; it prevented colonies from lowering interest rates, easing the judicial burden on debtors and seeking to monopolize the Indian trade. Most significant were the stern checks imposed on attempts by the colonial assemblies to encourage native manufacturing and to relieve the oppression of debts by the increase of the money supply of the colonies.

Following in the footsteps of the English themselves, colonials looked to public authority to aid in the development of native industries. In the best mercantilist tradition, therefore, colonial statute-books came to be filled with legislation which offered bounties to enterprisers, extended public credit to them, exempted them from taxation, gave them easy access to raw materials and in their behalf encouraged the location of new towns.

Against such legislation the Board of Trade regularly moved. On important matters, appeal was had to Parliament and general statutes were passed, notably the Woolen Act of 1699, which barred colonial wool, woolen yarn and woolen manufactures from inter-colonial and foreign commerce; the Hat Act of 1732, which prevented the exportation of hats out of the separate colonies and restricted colonial hatmakers to two apprentices; and the Iron Act of 1750. In addition, the axe of disallowance descended regularly. As early as 1705 a Pennsylvania law for building up the shoemaking industry was disallowed; in 1706, a New York law designed to develop a sail-cloth industry was disallowed; in 1706, 1707 and 1708, laws of Virginia and Maryland, providing for the establishment of new towns, were disallowed on the grounds that such new communities must invariably lead to a desire to found manufacturing industries and that their existence would draw off persons from the countryside where they were engaged in the production of tobacco. Indeed, in 1756, when the Board of Trade recommended disallowance of a Massachusetts law for aiding the production of linen, it could say flatly: "the passing of laws in the plantations for encouraging manufactures, which in any ways interfere with the manufacture of this kingdom, has always been thought improper, and has ever been discouraged."

Also, the royal governors were closely instructed to veto all legislation designed to assist the development of such manufactures as might compete with those of England. This had its effect, so that E. A. Russell, an

outstanding American authority upon the subject, has been led to conclude: "Largely as a result of the government's determined attitude in the matter, comparatively few laws for this purpose were enacted in the plantations." In no small measure the general result was heightened by the limitations imposed on English capital seeking investments in the colonies. English balances in the colonies and English new capital were kept away from manufactures; and they might be placed only in land and land operations. The over-extension of sugar planting, in the West Indies, and of tobacco planting, in the mainland colonies, undoubtedly was due to this restriction and therefore helped in the shaping of the crisis in the imperial-colonial relations which set in in the 1760's.

Thus, at the very time in England when the domestic system was rapidly being converted into the factory system and great advances were being made in the perfection of machinery exactly because the existence of a growing market was demanding more efficient methods of production, in the colonies methods of production remained at a hopelessly backward level because English and colonial capital could not enter manufacturing. An important outlet for accumulated funds was barred. The colonial capitalist economy, therefore, was narrowly restricted largely to land speculation, the dealing in furs and the carrying trade. When English mercantilism, for the protection of its home merchant capital, began to narrow these spheres then catastrophe threatened. The American Revolution can be understood only in terms of the necessity for colonial merchant capital to escape from the contracting prison walls of the English Mercantilist System.

5. The Carrying Trade

In an imperial economy the capitalist relationships between mother country and colonies as a rule lead to a colonial unfavorable balance of trade. The colonies buy the goods and services of the mother country and are encouraged to develop those raw materials the home capitalists require. In this they are aided by the investment of the mother country's balances and by new capital. Thus, in the Southern Colonies, tobacco largely was being produced to furnish returns for the English goods and services the plantation lords required; but, because the exchange left England with a favorable balance, by the 1770's its capitalists had more than £4,000,000 invested in Southern planting operations. To meet the charges on this debt, Southern planters were compelled constantly to expand their agricultural operations and to engage in the subsidiary activities of land speculation and the fur trade.

The Northern Colonies were less fortunately placed. The Northern Colonies directly produced little of those staples necessary to the maintenance of the English economy: the grains, provisions and work animals of New England, New York and Pennsylvania could not be permitted to enter England lest they disorganize the home commercial agricultural industry; and the same was true of the New England fishing catches. The Northern Colonies, of course, were a source for lumber, naval stores, furs, whale products and iron, and these England sorely needed to maintain her independence of European supplies. England sought to encourage these industries by bounties and other favored positions; but in vain. Notably unsuccessful was the effort to divert Northern colonial capital from shipbuilding and shipping into the production of naval stores by the Bounty Act of 1706.

The Northern Colonies, therefore, produced little for direct export to England to permit them to pay their balances, that is to say, for the increasing quantities of English drygoods, hardware and house furnishings they were taking. In view of the fact, too, that the Northern Colonies presented slight opportunities for the investment of English capital, it was incumbent upon the merchants of the region to develop returns elsewhere in order to obtain specie and bills of exchange with which to balance payments in England.

Out of this necessity arose the economic significance of the various triangular trading operations (and the subsidiary industries growing out of trade) the Northern merchants organized. Northern merchants and shipowners opened up regular markets in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia for their fishing tackle, salt, provisions and rum; they established an ever-growing commercial intercourse with the wine islands of the Canaries and Madeira, from which they bought wines direct and to which they sold barrel staves, foodstuffs and live animals; they sold fish to Spain, Portugal and Italy; their ports acted as entrepots for the transshipment of Southern staples to England and Southern Europe.

The trade with the West Indian sugar islands—as well as the traffic in Negro slaves and the manufacture of rum, which grew out of it—became the cornerstone of the Northern colonial capitalist economy. Northern merchants loaded their ships with all those necessaries the sugar planters were unable to produce—work animals for their mills; lumber for houses and outbuildings; staves, heads and hoops for barrels; flour and salted provisions for their tables; and refuse fish for their slaves—and made regular runs to the British islands of Barbados, the Leeward Islands and Jamaica, and then increasingly to the French, Spanish, Dutch and Danish islands and settlements dotting the Caribbean. Here they acquired in

return specie with which to pay their English balances, indigo, cotton, ginger, allspice and dyewoods for transshipment to England, and, above all, sugar and molasses for conversion into rum in the distilleries of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. It was rum that served as the basis of the intercourse between the Northern Colonies and the African Coast: rum paid for ivory, gums, beeswax and gold dust; and rum paid for Negroes who were carried to the sugar islands on that famous Middle Passage to furnish the labor supply without which the sugar plantation economy could not survive.

Such commercial transactions—in addition, of course, to the profits derived from the fisheries, whaling and shipbuilding—furnished the needed sources of return and their conduct the outlets for Northern merchant capitalist accumulations. But they were not enough with which to pay all the English bills and to absorb all the mounting funds of the Amorys, Faneuils, Hancocks and Boylstons of Boston, the Whartons, Willings and Morrises of Philadelphia, the Livingstons, Lows and Crugers of New York, the Wantons and Lopezes of Newport and the Browns of Providence. In three illegal forms of enterprises—in piracy, smuggling generally, and the illicit sugar and molasses trade with the foreign West Indian islands—Northern merchants found opportunities for the necessary expansion.

Piracy—at least up to the end of the seventeenth century, when England was able to exterminate it—played a significant part in maintaining the merchant capital of the Northern Colonies. English and colonial pirates, fitted out in Northern ports and backed financially by reputable merchants, preyed on the Spanish fleets of the Caribbean and even boldly fared out into the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean to terrorize ships engaged in the East Indies trade; and with their ships heavily laden with plate, drygoods and spices, put back into colonial ports where they sold their loot and divided their profits with the merchants who had financed them.

Smuggling contributed its share to the swelling of merchant fortunes. In the first place, there was the illegal direct intercourse between the colonies and European countries in the expanding list of enumerated articles; and, in the second place, ships on the homebound voyages from Europe or the West Indies brought large supplies of drygoods, silk, cocoa and brandies into the American Colonies without having declared these articles at English ports and paid the duties. Most important of all was the trade with the foreign West Indian sugar islands which was rendered illegal, after 1733, as a result of the imposition by the Molasses Act of prohibitive duties on the importation into the colonies of foreign sugar, molasses and rum.

In this West Indian trade was to be found the strength and the weakness of colonial merchant capital. The English sugar interest was the darling of the Mercantilist System. Sugar, more so even than tobacco, was the great oversea staple of the eighteenth-century world; and not only to it was bound a ramified English commercial industry made up of carriers, commission men, factors, financiers, processors and distributors: but sugar was converted into molasses and in turn distilled into rum to support the unholy slave traffic and the unsavory Indian trade. The sugar cultivation therefore had the constant solicitude of English imperial officialdom and a sugar bloc, made up of absentee landlords, exerted a powerful influence in Parliament. Indeed, so significant a rôle did sugar play in the imperial economy that in the 1770's the capital worth of West Indian sugar properties stood at £60,000,000: of which at least one-half was the stake of home English investors. When it is noted that in the whole of the Northern American mainland colonies the English capitalist stake at most was only one-sixth as great, then the reason for the favoring of the sugar colonies as against the Northern commercial colonies, after 1763, is revealed in a single illuminating flash.

The feud had long been smoldering. With the third decade of the eighteenth century, Northern merchants increasingly had taken to buying their sugar and molasses from the foreign sugar islands. Prices were cheaper by from 25% to 40%: due largely to the fact that the English planters were engaged in a single-crop exploitative agriculture in the interests of an absentee landlordism, while the French, Spanish, Dutch and Danish planters were owners-operators who cultivated directly their small holdings and diversified their crops; too, the foreign sugar was not encumbered by imposts and mercantilist marketing restrictions. In the foreign sugar islands, as well, Northern ship captains and owners found it possible to develop new markets for their flour, provisions, lumber, work animals and fish, thus obtaining another source from which specie and bills of exchange could be derived.

So heavy had this traffic become that the alarmed British sugar interest in Parliament succeeded in having passed the Molasses Act of 1733, which was designed virtually to outlaw the colonial-foreign island trade. But the act did not have the desired effect because it could not be adequately enforced: the British customs machinery in the colonies was weak and venal and the naval patrols that could be allocated to this duty were inadequate because of England's engagement in foreign wars from 1740 almost continuously for twenty years. Within these twenty years the illicit intercourse with the foreign West Indies took on such great proportions that it quite truly became the foundation of Northern colonial merchant

capitalism. By the late 1750's, when the traffic was at its height, at least 11,500 hogsheads of molasses reached Rhode Island annually from the foreign islands, as against 2,500 from the English; in Massachusetts the ratio was 14,500 to 500. In Massachusetts alone there were some 63 distilleries in 1750 and perhaps half that number existed in Rhode Island; and it was the fluid rum stream that reached far Guinea, Newfoundland and remote Indian trading posts: to join slaves, gold dust, the mackerel and cod, and peltries with the fortunes of the New England trading enterprisers.

It is not to be wondered that British planters, threatened with bankruptcy, kept up a constant clamor for the enforcement of the laws and the total stoppage of the foreign island trade. Beginning with 1760, imperial England began to tighten the screws with the stricter enforcement of the Acts of Trade and Navigation; from thence on, particularly after France had been compelled to sue for peace in 1763, England embarked on a systematic campaign to wipe out the trade between the Northern Colonies and the foreign West Indies. Northern merchant capital, its most important life-line cut off, was being strangulated; it is not difficult to see why wealthy merchants of Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Newport and Providence should be converted into revolutionists.

6. Control of Colonial Currency

At still another point the Mercantilist System brought an unendurable pressure: this was in its control of the colonial currency. The colonies, it has been pointed out, found themselves constantly in a debtor status within the imperial-colonial relations; and their plight was accentuated by the insistence upon the payment of colonial balances in specie and the absence of easy credit facilities. Colonial merchant capital, therefore, constantly preoccupied itself with the money question: and efforts to expand or debase the currency on the part of the colonies and, contrariwise, efforts to maintain it at a high value on the part of England, were symptomatic of the disharmony that existed within the mercantilist framework.[2]

The colonies resorted to innumerable means to provide themselves with a greater money supply; all of these attempts England spiked. Commodity money, at values fixed by colonial assemblies, was forbidden. In 1684 colonial mints were banned. Laws placing embargoes on the exporta-

2 The reader desirous of pursuing the ramifications of the colonial currency question further is referred to Curtis P. Nettels' *Money Supply of the American Colonies before 1720* (Madison, Wis. 1934), one of the truly significant monographs in American colonial history. Nettels has caught the significance of the unfavorable colonial balance of payments in the colonial-imperial relations, a subject never before properly discussed by American historians.

tion of coin and raising the legal value of foreign coins in circulation were disallowed. In 1704 the authority of Parliament was invoked to fix a uniform value for Spanish pieces of eight and to prescribe prison sentences for violators.

It was about the colonial right to emit paper money that a stormy controversy raged for almost three-quarters of a century. Starting out by issuing short-term bills of credit in anticipation of taxes, which were not to be regarded as legal tender, in time most of the colonies came to insist that these bills be treated as currency and acceptable in payment for all private, as well as public, transactions. Also, all colonies but Georgia tried to issue bills based not only on tax anticipations but on private land mortgages and erected public mortgage banks to handle the paper. Massachusetts went a step further when it permitted a group of private individuals to organize a "Land and Manufactures Bank" in 1740; this society, capitalized at £150,000, was to accept land as security for its stock and against this real estate it was to print notes to be used for lending purposes.

As a result of these various activities the paper currency in circulation mounted and depreciation set in in all the colonies but New York and Pennsylvania. In Massachusetts, the value of sterling to paper money reached a maximum ratio of 11 to 1; in New Hampshire it got to 24 to 1 and by 1771 sterling had vanished altogether; in Rhode Island it was 26 to 1; in South Carolina it was 7 to 1. It was inevitable that the Board of Trade should ever be on the alert to protect contracts, notably those in which English merchants were involved, and by recommendations of disallowance and instructions to royal governors seek to restrict the issues of bills to the purposes for which these were originally designed. But Parliament had to be resorted to. In 1741, it outlawed the Massachusetts Bank; in 1751, it denied to the New England Colonies the right to make any further issues of legal-tender bills of credit or bank notes; and in 1764 it passed the Currency Act which extended the prohibition to all the colonies and demanded that provision be made for the retirement of all outstanding bills.

The currency began immediately to contract and all debtors found themselves oppressed by fixed charges. The Whig pamphleteer John Dickinson was scarcely exaggerating the plight of colonial merchant capital when in 1765 he wrote:

"Trade is decaying and all credit is expiring. Money is becoming so extremely scarce that reputable freeholders find it impossible to pay debts which are trifling in comparison to their estates. If creditors sue, and take out executions, the lands and personal estates, as the sale must be for ready money, are sold for a small part of what they were worth when the debts

were contracted. The debtors are ruined. The creditors get back but part of their debt and that ruins them. Thus the consumers break the shopkeepers; they break the merchants; and the shock must be felt as far as London."

7. The Revolutionary Crisis

Such were the objective economic factors which resulted in making the position of the colonies, within the framework of the imperial-colonial relations, intolerable. The period of 1763-1775 was one of crisis, economically and politically: for in that decade it was demonstrated that English and colonial merchant capital both could not operate within a contracting sphere in which clashes of interest were becoming sharper and sharper. From 1760 on, pushed by those various groups whose wellbeing had been neglected during the years England was engaged in foreign wars, the rulers of the empire labored mightily to repair the rents that had appeared in the Mercantilist System.

The Northern "smuggling interest" was hunted down vigorously. The admiralty courts and their procedure were augmented and strengthened; placemen in the customs service who were living in England were ordered to their colonial posts; in 1763 the navy was converted into a patrol fleet with power of search even on the high seas; informers were encouraged; and suits involving the seizure of cargoes and the payment of revenues were taken out of the hands of the local courts.

Utilizing the tax measures of 1764 and later (presumably designed to raise a revenue for the defense of the colonies) as a screen, Parliament imposed limitation after limitation upon the activities of the merchants. The Act of 1764 and the Stamp Act of 1765 called for the payment of duties and taxes in specie, thus further draining the colonies of currency and contracting the credit base. To divert colonial capital into raw materials, the first measure increased the bounties paid for the colonial production of hemp and flax, placed high duties on the colonial importation of foreign indigo, and removed the British import duties on colonial whale fins. To cripple the trade with the foreign West Indies a high duty was placed on refined sugar; while the importation of foreign rum was forbidden altogether and lumber was placed on the enumerated list. To give English manufacturers a firmer grip on their raw materials, hides and skins, pig and bar iron, and potash and pearl ashes were also included among the enumerated articles. To maintain the English monopoly of the colonial-finished goods market the entrance into the colonies of certain kinds of French and Oriental drygoods was taxed for the first time.

In 1764, to weaken further colonial merchant activity, high duties were imposed on wine from the wine islands and wine, fruits and oil from Spain and Portugal brought directly to America (in American ships, as a rule), while such articles brought over from England were to pay only nominal duties. And in 1766, in order to extend the market of English merchants in Europe, Parliament ordered that all remaining non-enumerated articles (largely flour, provisions and fish) bound for European ports north of Cape Finisterre be landed first in England.

It is significant to note that the revenue features of these acts were quickly abandoned: the Stamp Tax was repealed in 1766; and, in 1770, three years after their passage, the Townshend duties on paper, paint and glass were lifted. Only the slight tax on tea remained: and even this was used as an instrument to bludgeon the aggressive Northern merchant class into helplessness.

In order to save the East India Company from collapse, in 1773 that powerful financial organization was given permission to ship in its own vessels and dispose of, through its own merchandising agencies, a surplus stock of 17,000,000 pounds of tea in America: and, in this way, drive out of business those Americans who carried, imported and sold in retail channels British tea (and, indeed, foreign tea, for the British tea under the new dispensation could be sold cheaper even than the smuggled Holland article). The merchants all over America were not slow to read the correct significance of this measure. As the distinguished historian Arthur M. Schlesinger has put it, pamphleteers set out to show "that the present project of the East India Company was the entering wedge for larger and more ambitious undertakings calculated to undermine the colonial mercantile world. Their opinion was based on the fact that, in addition to the article of tea, the East India Company imported into England vast quantities of silks, calico and other fabrics, spices, drugs and chinaware, all commodities of staple demand; and on their fear that the success of the present venture would result in an extension of the same principle to the sale of the other articles."

The Southern landlords did not escape. The Proclamation Line of 1763, for the purpose of setting up temporary governments in the far western lands wrested from France after the Seven Years' War, in effect shut off the whole area beyond the crest of the Appalachians to colonial fur traders and land dealers. By taking control of the region out of the hands of the colonial governors, putting it in charge of imperial agents and ordering the abandonment of the settlements already planted, the British looked forward to the maintenance of a great Indian reservation in which the fur trade—in the interests of British concessionaires—would continue to

flourish. A few years later these rigorous regulations were relaxed somewhat: but the designs of English land speculators on the area, the prohibition of free land grants, the ordering of land sales at auctions only and the imposition of high quit-rents, hardly improved matters. The planters were lost to the English cause. Their situation, already made perilous by the Currency Act of 1764, was now hopeless.

Thus, merchant capitalists—whether land speculators or traders—were converted from contented and loyal subjects into rebellious enemies of the Crown. Tea was destroyed in Boston harbor, turned back unloaded from New York and Philadelphia, and landed but not sold in Charleston. In 1774 the First Continental Congress, to which came delegates from all the colonies, met and wrote the Continental Association, an embargo agreement, which was so successfully enforced that imports from England virtually disappeared in 1775.

8. Position of Colonial Petty Bourgeoisie

The discontents of planters and merchants, in themselves, were not enough to hasten the releasing process. To be successful, assistance was required from the ranks of the more numerous lower middle class small farmers, traders, artisans and mechanics, and the working class seamen, fishermen and laborers. This was not difficult: for the material well-being of the lower classes was tied to the successful enterprising of the upper.

The colonies had enjoyed a period of unprecedented prosperity during the years of the war with France. The expanding market in the West Indies, the great expenditures of the British quartermasters, the illegal and contraband trade with the enemy forces, all had furnished steady employment for workers on the fleets and in the shipyards and ports and lucrative outlets for the produce of small farmers. But with the end of the war and the passage of the restrictive legislation of 1763 and after, depression had set in to last until 1770. Stringency and bankruptcy everywhere confronted the merchants and big farmers; seamen and laborers were thrown out of work, small tradesmen were compelled to close their shops and small farmers were faced by ruin because of their expanded acreage, a diminished market and heavy fixed charges made particularly onerous as a result of currency contraction. Into the bargain, escape into the frontier zones —always the last refuge of the dispossessed—was shut off as a result of the Proclamation of 1763.

In addition, the colonial petty bourgeoisie groaned under specific class political and economic disabilities. Politically, almost universal disfranchisement, unequal legislative representation for the newer areas and the wide

absence of local government placed state power in the hands of a small group of big propertied interests closely indentified with the crown. In colonial America only men of sizable properties could vote and hold office; indeed, before the Revolution, the proportion of potential voters varied from one-sixth to one-fiftieth of the male population in the different colonies. In the economic sphere, the constricting hand of monopoly everywhere was to be found. On the land, the legal institutions of entail and primogeniture checked opportunity for younger sons; engrossing landlords and land speculators (whether they were the Crown, the proprietaries, absentee owners or the New England "common" land proprietors) prevented the settlement and improvement of small properties; in the South, the tidewater lords would not erect warehouses to encourage tobacco cultivation among the farmers of the up-country; and in New York, inadequate boundary surveys furnished the big manor lords with an easy instrument of oppression over their smaller neighbors. Everywhere, the threat of Indian uprisings, in the interests of the fur trade and the maintenance of land values in the settled regions, filled the days and nights of frontiersmen with dread.

In the towns, small tradesmen and mechanics and artisans were compelled to struggle unequally against the great merchant interests. Peddlers were submitted to close regulation and forced to pay high license fees. It was impossible to maintain city markets for long, because small merchants here tended to compete successfully with the big ones. In New England, a small company of candlers had got the whole whaling industry in its grip and not only choked off the competition of the lesser manufacturers but fixed the prices for the basic raw material. In New York, and undoubtedly in the other urban communities as well, opportunities to obtain the freedom of the city—which meant the right to engage in certain occupations, whether as tradesmen or artisans—were very severely restricted.

Men of little property were weighed down by debts and oppressed by an inadequate currency; they were forced to support, in many of the colonies, an established church; and they were at the mercy of arbitrary executive and judicial authority. On many sides, too, they saw looming larger and larger the threat of a slave economy to the free institutions of small properties and independent craftsmen. These were the persons who constituted the left-wing of the colonial revolutionary host.

Such was the concentration of colonial forces that made possible the challenging of the power of Great Britain; and the American Revolution proceeded inexorably through the preliminary stages of discussion and illegal organization into the revolutionary one of armed resistance.

9. The Triumph of the Revolution

The work of the Revolution was carried on throughout the whole decade of military operations: quite generally, and in almost everyone of the liberated commonwealths, revolutionary governments were at work destroying all the old imperial agencies of oppression. As regards the land: the royal edicts against movement into the trans-Allegheny West were disregarded and immediately land speculators and pioneers began to push across the mountains, so that by 1790, 221,000 persons were settled in a widely sprawling area; Crown and proprietary lands were seized; the quit-rent was abolished; the movement for the termination of entails and primogeniture was begun, and the institution of the King's Woods—under which the Crown claimed the fairest stands of timber for the royal navy—was put an end to. As regards manufactures: by bounties and prizes, the establishment of societies and the raising of protective tariff walls, the new states did everything in their power to encourage the manufacture of not only the war-time guns and powder but peace-time textiles, ironware, pottery, paper, glass and leather goods; and in this sphere success was measurable. In trade: the war years saw a vast extension of American enterprising as the termination of the Mercantilist System threw open the ports of France, Holland and Spain to American ships. Also, the Anglican Church was disestablished; the importation of Negro slaves was stopped in nearly all the Southern States and many of the Northern States began to provide for gradual abolition; serious efforts were made to put an end to the savage penal systems the colonists had brought over from England; and provisions for the inauguration of programs of popular education appeared in a number of the early state constitutions.

In 1783, when peace was formally declared, politically and economically the American states were free of the leading strings that had bound them to the British imperial power. And American merchant capitalism had the whole world, productively and geographically (except, of course, for the British Isles and the British colonies), over which to range.

Materialism and Spooks[1]

BY FRIEDRICH ENGELS

It is an ancient saying incorporated in the dialectic of popular consciousness that extremes meet. We are therefore hardly likely to err if we look for the extremest degree of fantasy, credulity and superstition not in that scientific tendency which, like the German *Naturphilosophie,* seeks to force the objective world into the framework of its subjective thought but rather in the opposite tendency which boasts of its dependence upon pure experience, treats thought with sovereign contempt and in fact has carried matters to the furthest point of thoughtlessness. This school rules in England. Its father, the much praised Francis Bacon, had already demanded that his new empirical inductive method be prosecuted in order to achieve, before all else, the lengthening of the span of life, rejuvenation to some extent, change of stature and lineament, transformation of bodies into each other, creation of new species, mastery of the air, control over storms. He complains that investigations of this kind have been neglected and offers in his natural history elaborate formulae to make gold and perform many other miracles. Similarly, Isaac Newton in his old age busied himself much with an exegesis of the revelation of John. It is no wonder, therefore, that during the last few years English empiricism through some of its representatives—by no means the worst—has apparently fallen a hopeless victim to the spirit rappings and clairvoyant visions imported from America.

The first natural scientist who belongs to this group is none other than the highly worthy zoologist and botanist, Alfred Russel Wallace, the same one who simultaneously with Darwin presented the theory of changes in species through natural selection. In his little book on *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism* (London, Burns, 1875), he relates that his first experiences in this branch of scientific knowledge date from 1844 when he attended the lectures of Spencer Hall on mesmerism and as a consequence made similar experiments on his students. "I was extremely interested in

1 Translation by Sidney Hook, for the first time into English, of "Natural Science in the Spirit World," from "Dialektik und Natur," in *Marx-Engels Archiv,* edited by D. Riazanov, Bd. II, pp. 207-16.

the subject and followed it with ardour" (p. 149). He produced not only hypnotic sleep together with the effects of local insensibility and muscular rigidity but he also confirmed the correctness of Gall's cranial chart in that by touching any given Gallian bump he could arouse the corresponding activity in the hypnotized patient properly expressed through lively gestures. He also proved that the patient when merely touched shared all the sensory experiences of the operator. He made him drunk on a glass of water just as soon as he told him that it was a glass of cognac. He could make one of the youngsters, even in a waking state, so dumb that he couldn't recall his own name which, by the by, other school teachers have accomplished without hypnotism. And so on.

Now it happens that I also saw this Spencer Hall in Manchester during the winter of 1843-1844. He was an ordinary charlatan who wandered around the country under the protection of some parsons, performing hypnotic-phrenological exhibitions on a young girl in order to prove thereby the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the absurdity of the materialism which the Owenites were then preaching in all the large cities. The young lady was put into a hypnotic sleep and just as soon as the operator touched a given Gallian organ of her cranium she fell into demonstrative, theatrical gestures and poses representing the activity of the organ concerned. For the organ of filial love (philoprogenitiveness), *e.g.,* she fondled and kissed a fantasy baby, etc. The worthy Hall even enriched Gall's cranial geography with a new Batavian Island. At the very crown of the head he discovered an organ of worship. When touched, his hypnotic lady sank to her knees, clasped her hands and presented to the astonished assemblage of philistines a picture of an angel rapt in prayer. That was the end and climax of the performance. The existence of God was proved.

The same thing that happened to Wallace happened to me and an acquaintance of mine. The phenomenon interested us and we attempted to see to what extent we could reproduce it. A bright lad of twelve offered himself as a subject. Mild staring and stroking put him without any difficulty into a hypnotic trance. And since we went to work with a little less credulousness and a little less ardour than Wallace, we came to quite other conclusions. Aside from the easily induced muscular rigidity and insensibility, we found a state of complete passivity of the will bound up with an exaggerated suggestibility of feeling. Startled out of his lethargy by any kind of stimulus from without, the patient exhibited a much greater animation than in his waking state. There was not a sign of any mysterious *rapport* with the operator: any one could set the slumberer into activity. To bring the Gallian cranial organs into play was the very least for us. We

went much farther. Not only could we substitute one for the other and transfer them to any part of the body but we fabricated any given number of other organs—of singing, whistling, tooting, dancing, boxing, sewing, cobbling, smoking, etc., and put them any place we pleased. If Wallace was able to make his patient drunk with a glass of water, we discovered in the big toe an organ of intoxication which we merely had to touch in order to set going the finest drunken comedy. But be it understood—no organ showed the slightest trace of activity until the patient was given to understand what was expected of him. The youngster perfected himself through practice to such an extent that the barest indication sufficed. The organs produced in this way always remained in operation during later hypnotic spells unless they were changed by the same procedure. The patient had a double memory, one for the waking state, and a second, completely separate, for the hypnotic state. As far as the passivity of his will, his absolute submission to the will of a third person, is concerned, that loses every appearance of the miraculous so long as we remember that the whole situation began with the submission of the will of the patient to that of the operator and without it could not have been established. The most powerful hypnotic wizard of the earth with all his Latin is helpless once his patient laughs in his face.

While we, with our frivolous scepticism, found that the basis of the hypnotic-phrenological charlatanry was a number of phenomena which differed from those of the waking state at most in degree and required no mystical interpretation, Wallace's ardor led him to a series of self-deceptions by force of which he confirmed Gall's cranial chart in all details and established a mysterious *rapport* between the operator and patient.[2] Throughout Wallace's entire description, whose sincerity borders on naiveté, one can glimpse that he was much less concerned to investigate the actual background of charlatanry than to reproduce at any price the series of phenomena. It requires only this state of mind to transform in short order by simple and easy self-deceptions the original scientist into an adept. Wallace ended with a faith in hypnotic-phrenological wonders and already stood with one foot in the world of spirits.

He drew the other foot after him in the year 1865. Returning after a twelve-year journey in the torrid zone, he was introduced to table turning experiments in the company of various "mediums." How quick his progress was and how complete his mastery of the subject, the above men-

2 As has already been said the patients perfect themselves through practice. It is entirely possible that after the submission of the will becomes habitual, the relationship between the participants becomes more intimate, individual effects are intensified, and are weakly reflected even in the waking state.

tioned brochure gives evidence. Not only does he demand that we accept as gospel truth the alleged wonders of Home, the Davenport brothers and other "mediums" who materialize for money and who more often than not are exposed as impostors but also a whole series of presumably accredited ghost stories of earlier times. The priestesses of the Greek oracles, the witches of the Middle Ages were "mediums" and Iamblichus' *De divinatione* already described quite accurately "the astonishing phenomena of modern spiritualism."

How lightly Wallace takes the question of the scientific confirmation and validation of these wonders one example will illustrate. It is certainly no easy assumption to believe that the aforesaid spirits permit themselves to be photographed, and we therefore have the right to request that before we assume such spirit photographs to be genuine that they be certified in the most unquestionable fashion. Well, Wallace relates (p. 187) that in March 1872, Mrs. Guppy, née Nicholls, a star medium, permitted herself to be photographed together with her husband and small son at Mr. Hudson's in Notting Hill. On two different photographs there appeared behind her a noble feminine figure, finely draped in white gauze, with somewhat oriental features, who appeared to be blessing her. "Here then one of two things *are* absolutely certain.[3] Either a living, intelligent, but invisible creature was present or Mr. and Mrs. Guppy, the photographer and some fourth person planned a wicked deception and since then have continued it. But I know Mr. and Mrs. Guppy very well and have the *absolute conviction* that they are as incapable of a deception of this kind as any earnest seeker after truth in the field of natural science."

So! Either deception or spirit photography. Agreed. And if deception, either the spirit was already on the plate or four persons must have participated, or three if we rule out as incompetent or duped old Mr. Guppy, who died in January 1875 at the age of 84 (all that was necessary was to send him behind the Spanish wall of the background). That it was possible for a photographer without any difficulty to get a "model" for the spirit is something we needn't waste words over. And indeed, soon thereafter the photographer Hudson was publicly accused of professional forgery of spirit photographs so that even Wallace says propitiatingly: "One thing is clear: if deception took place, it was discovered immediately by the spiritualists themselves." The photographer then can hardly be relied upon. There remains Mrs. Guppy. For her there speaks "the abso-

3 "Here, then, one of two things *are* absolutely certain." The world of spirits is superior to grammar. A wag once asked that the spirit of the grammarian Lindley Murray be evoked. To the question whether or not he was present, he answered. "I are" (American for "I am"). The medium hailed from America.

lute conviction" of friend Wallace and nothing else. And nothing else? By no means. For the absolute reliability of Mrs. Guppy there speaks her contention that one evening towards the end of June 1871 she was transported through the air in an unconscious state from her house in Highbury Hill Park to 69 Lambs Conduit Street—three English miles as the crow flies—and deposited on the table in the aforementioned house number 69 during a spiritualist séance. The doors of the room were shut and although Mrs. Guppy is one of the most corpulent ladies in London, which is certainly saying something, her sudden invasion left not the smallest hole either in the doors or in the ceiling (related in the *London Echo,* June 8, 1871). And whoever now does not believe in the genuineness of spirit photography, he is beyond all help.

The second famous adept among the English natural scientists is William Crookes, the discoverer of the chemical element Thallium and of the radiometer. Crookes began to investigate spiritualistic manifestations around 1871 and employed a great many pieces of mechanical and physical apparatus, spring balances, electric batteries, etc. Whether he brought to his work the most important of all pieces of apparatus, a sceptical-critical head, or kept it in good working condition to the last, remains to be seen. At any rate it was not long before Crookes was as completely taken in as Wallace. For several years, he tells us, a young woman, "Miss Florence Cook has displayed remarkable powers as a medium. Lately she achieved her high point in the evocation of a perfect female figure who appeared barefoot in white flowing garments and claimed to be of spiritualistic origin while the medium herself in dark clothes lay tied and in deep sleep in a cabinet or adjoining room." This spirit who took the name Katey and who resembled Miss Cook very closely was suddenly grasped and held by the waist one evening by Mr. Volckman—the present husband of Mrs. Guppy—in order to see whether the spirit was not Miss Cook in another edition. The spirit proved to be a rather experienced young woman and defended herself quite vigorously. The spectators intervened, the gas was turned off and when, after a scuffle, peace had been restored and the room lit, the spirit had disappeared and Miss Cook lay tied and unconscious in a corner. Volckman, however, has maintained to this very day that it was Miss Cook whom he grabbed and no one else. In order to test this scientifically, a famous electrician, Varley, in a new experiment, caused the electric current from a battery to flow through the medium in such a way that she could not play the part of a spirit without breaking the current. Nevertheless a spirit appeared. And in fact it was someone different from Miss Cook. The task of Crookes was to verify this further. His first step was to acquire the *confidence* of the spiritualistic lady. This confidence—so he

himself says in *The Spiritualist* of June 5, 1874—"increased gradually to a point where she refused to hold a séance *unless I directed the arrangement.* She said she wanted me continually to be near her, and near to the cabinet. I found that after this confidence had been established and she was assured that *I would not break any promise made to her,* the phenomena increased appreciably in strength, and methods of proof were freely permitted which could not be attained in any other way. She *consulted* me concerning the persons present at the séances and where they were to be seated, for latterly she had become very nervous as a result of certain ill-advised suggestions that in addition to other, more scientific, methods of investigation, *force* should also be applied."

The young lady spiritualist requited this charming as well as scientific confidence in the fullest measure. She appeared—which cannot now surprise us—even in the house of Crookes, played with his children and related to them "anecdotes of her adventures in India," gave Crookes also the advantage of hearing "several of the bitter experiences of her past life," permitted him to take her in his arms to convince himself of her sturdy materiality, let him register the number per minute of her pulse beats and respirations, and finally let herself be photographed beside Crookes. "This figure," says Wallace, "after she had been seen, touched, photographed and spoken to, *absolutely disappeared* from a small room, from which there was no other exit save through an adjoining room full with spectators"—no great trick if we presuppose that the spectators were polite enough to extend to Crookes, in whose house this occurred, not less confidence than he had shown to the spirit.

Unfortunately these "completely accredited phenomena" are not credible forthwith even to spiritualists themselves. We saw above how the very spiritualistic Volckman allowed himself a very materialistic griphold. Well, a cleric and a committee member of "The British National Association of Spiritualists" also attended a séance of Miss Cook and demonstrated without any difficulty that the room, through whose door the spirit entered and disappeared, communicated with the outside world through a *second door.* The behavior of Crookes who was also present gave "my faith that there might have been something to these manifestations after all, the final death-blow" (*Mystic London,* by the Rev. C. Maurice Davies, London, Tinsley Brothers).

And to fill the cup to overflowing, there came the day in America when they "materialized" "Katey." A married couple, Holmes, held séances in Philadelphia at which a "Katey" also appeared and was richly rewarded by the believers. A sceptic, however, did not rest until he had picked up the traces of the said Katey who had once gone on strike because

she had not been paid enough. He discovered her in a boarding house—a young lady of unquestionable blood and bones and in possession of all the gifts made to the spirit.

At the same time, the Continent began to experience its scientific spiritualists. A scientific foundation in St. Petersburg—I cannot recall whether the University or Academy—delegated Messrs. Asakoff, a councillor of state, and Butlerov, a chemist, to investigate spiritualistic phenomena. It does not appear that anything came of it. On the other hand—if the noisy proclamations of the spiritualists are to be believed—Germany has also found her man in the person of Professor Zoellner of Leipzig.

As is well known, Zoellner has for many years worked intensively on the "fourth dimension" of space and discovered that many things which are impossible in three dimensional space are quite intelligible in a four dimensional space. For example, in the latter one can turn a closed metal sphere inside out like a glove without making a hole in it, one can tie a knot in a thread which is endless in both directions or which has the two ends fastened down, intertwine two separate closed rings without opening either one of them, and other remarkable things. According to recent triumphant reports from the spirit world, Professor Zoellner has applied to one or more mediums in order to ascertain, with their help, the location of the fourth dimension. The success was astonishing. The arm of the chair and his own arm which had rested on it while his hand remained on the table, had become intertwined by the time the séance was over, a thread fastened by both ends to the table had acquired four knots, etc. In short, all the miracles of the fourth dimension were accomplished with the greatest of ease by the spirits. Be it observed: *relato refero,* I do not vouch for the correctness of the spirit bulletins. If they should be incorrect, Zoellner ought to thank me for giving him an opportunity to set them right. But should these experiences of Zoellner be properly reported, then they manifestly mark a new era in spiritualistic science as well as in mathematics. The spirits establish the existence of the fourth dimension just as the fourth dimension guarantees the existence of the spirits. Once that is established, there opens up for science a completely new and immeasurable field. All traditional mathematics and natural science becomes only a preparatory school for the mathematics of the fourth, and still higher dimensions, and for the mechanics, physics, chemistry and physiology of the spirits who are at home in these higher dimensions. After all Crookes has scientifically proved how much loss of weight tables and other pieces of furniture suffer in their passage—we may now say it—to the fourth dimension, and Wallace has explained it as quite settled that there fire does not burn the human body. And think of the physiology of these spirit bodies!

They breathe, have a pulse, lungs, heart and circulatory system and therefore in respect to the rest of their bodily organs are at least as well equipped as we are. For in order to breathe, carbohydrates [?] are necessary which are burnt in the lungs and these can only be introduced from without; thus stomach, intestine and other appurtenances, and having established so much, the rest follows without difficulty. The existence of such organs, however, implies the possibility of their becoming diseased and consequently Virchow may some day be called upon to write a cellular pathology of the spirit world. And since most of these spirits are wondrously beautiful young women who are no different—really not a whit—from earthly damsels except for their unearthly beauty, can it be long before they run into "men who feel love"? And when that "woman's heart is not lacking" which Crookes observed by examining the pulse beat, there opens up for natural selection also a fourth dimension in which there is no danger that it will be confused with the wicked Social-Democracy.

Enough. It is obvious what the easiest path from natural science to mysticism is. Not the fantastic theories of *Naturphilosophie* but the most matter of fact, theory-scorning, thought-suspicious empiricism. It is not *a prioristic* necessity which proves the existence of spirits but the experiential observation of Messrs. Wallace, Crookes and Company. When we believe the spectro-analytic observations of Crookes which led to the discovery of the metal Thallium, or the rich zoological finds of Wallace in the Malay Archipelago, the same belief is demanded of us for the spiritualistic experiences and discoveries of both these scientists. And when we point out that there is a small difference between them, namely, that we can verify the one and not the other, the spiritualists reply that this is not the case, and that they are ready to give us an opportunity to verify the appearance of the spirits also.

In fact one cannot scorn the dialectic with impunity. One may have as little respect for theoretical thinking as one pleases, two facts of nature cannot be brought into connection or insight won into their actual relationships without theoretical thought. It is merely a question whether one has thought correctly or not, and contempt for theory is obviously the most certain way to think naturally and therewith falsely. False thinking carried to its furthest consequence, by a well known dialectic law, reaches the opposite of its starting point. And so the empirical contempt for dialectic is punished in that several of the most sober empiricists are drawn by it into the most tedious of all superstitions, modern spiritualism. The same is true of mathematics. The ordinary metaphysical mathematicians point with huge pride to the absolute invincibility of the results of their science. Among these results, however, are the imaginary magnitudes to which are

attributed a certain reality. But if one has been accustomed to impute to the $\sqrt{-1}$ or to the fourth dimension any kind of reality outside of our own heads, it makes little difference whether one goes a step further and also accepts the spirit world of the mediums. As Kettler von Dollinger said: "The man has defended so much nonsense in his lifetime, that he can truly assert his infallibility into the bargain."

In fact pure empiricism is incapable of settling accounts with the spiritualists. In the first place, the "higher" phenomena are only then shown when the scientist concerned is already so far gone that he sees nothing except what he is supposed to see or wants to see—as Crookes himself writes with inimitable naiveté. Secondly, it does not matter to the spiritualist if hundreds of alleged facts are revealed to be swindles and if dozens of alleged mediums are exposed as ordinary pickpockets. So long as *every* single alleged miracle has not been explained away, they have enough ground left, as Wallace so clearly said upon the occasion of the falsified spirit photographs. The existence of the falsifications proves the genuineness of the genuine.

And so empiricism sees itself compelled to get rid of the importunities of the spiritualists not with empirical experiments but with theoretical considerations and to say with Huxley: "The only good that I can see in the demonstration of the truth of 'spiritualism' is to furnish an additional argument against suicide. Better live a crossing-sweeper than die and be made to talk twaddle by a 'medium' hired at a guinea a séance."[4]

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4 Cf. T. H. Huxley's letter to The Committee of the London *Dialectical Society.*

Nature of Abstract Art

BY MEYER SCHAPIRO

BEFORE there was an art of abstract painting, it was already widely believed that the value of a picture was a matter of colors and shapes alone. Music and architecture were constantly held up to painters as examples of a pure art which did not have to imitate objects but derived its effects from elements peculiar to itself. But such ideas could not be readily accepted, since no one had yet seen a painting made up of colors and shapes, representing nothing. If pictures of the objects around us were often judged according to qualities of form alone, it was obvious that in doing so one was distorting or reducing the pictures; you could not arrive at these paintings simply by manipulating forms. And in so far as the objects to which these forms belonged were often particular individuals and places, real or mythical figures, bearing the evident marks of a time, the pretension that art was above history through the creative energy or personality of the artist was not entirely clear. In abstract art, however, the pretended autonomy and absoluteness of the esthetic emerged in a concrete form. Here, finally, was an art of painting in which only esthetic elements seem to be present.

Abstract art had therefore the value of a practical demonstration. In these new paintings the very processes of designing and inventing seemed to have been brought on to the canvas; the pure form once masked by an extraneous content was liberated and could now be directly perceived. Painters who do not practice this art have welcomed it on just this ground, that it strengthened their conviction of the absoluteness of the esthetic and provided them a discipline in pure design. Their attitude toward past art was also completely changed. The new styles accustomed painters to the vision of colors and shapes as disengaged from objects and created an immense confraternity of works of art, cutting across the barriers of time and place. They made it possible to enjoy the remotest arts, those in which the represented objects were no longer intelligible, even the drawings of children and madmen, and especially primitive arts with drastically distorted figures, which had been regarded as artless curios even by insistently esthetic critics. Before this time Ruskin could say in his *Political*

Economy of Art, in calling for the preservation of medieval and Renaissance works, that "in Europe alone, pure and precious ancient art exists, for there is none in America, none in Asia, none in Africa." What was once considered monstrous, now became pure form and pure expression, the esthetic evidence that feeling and thought are prior to the represented world. The art of the whole world was now available on a single unhistorical and universal plane as a panorama of the formalizing energies of man.

These two aspects of abstract painting, the exclusion of natural forms and the unhistorical universalizing of the qualities of art, have a crucial importance for the general theory of art. Just as the discovery of non-Euclidian geometry gave a powerful impetus to the view that mathematics was independent of experience, so abstract painting cut at the roots of the classic ideas of artistic imitation. The analogy of mathematics was in fact present to the minds of the apologists of abstract art; they have often referred to non-Euclidian geometry in defense of their own position, and have even suggested an historical connection between them.

Today the abstractionists and their Surrealist offspring are more and more concerned with objects and the older claims of abstract art have lost the original force of insurgent convictions. Painters who had once upheld this art as the logical goal of the entire history of forms have refuted themselves in returning to the impure natural forms. The demands for liberty in art are no longer directed against a fettering tradition of nature; the esthetic of abstraction has itself become a brake on new movements. Not that abstract art is dead, as its philistine enemies have been announcing for over twenty years; it is still practiced by some of the finest painters and sculptors in Europe, whose work shows a freshness and assurance that are lacking in the newest realistic art. The conception of a possible field of "pure art"—whatever its value—will not die so soon, though it may take on forms different from those of the last thirty years; and very likely the art that follows in the countries which have known abstraction will be affected by it. The ideas underlying abstract art have penetrated deeply into all artistic theory, even of their original opponents; the language of absolutes and pure sources of art, whether of feeling, reason, intuition or the sub-conscious mind, appears in the very schools which renounce abstraction. "Objective" painters strive for "pure objectivity," for the object given in its "essence" and completeness, without respect to a viewpoint, and the Surrealists derive their images from pure thought, freed from the perversions of reason and everyday experience. Very little is written today—sympathetic to modern art—which does not employ this language of absolutes.

I

In this article I will take as my point of departure Barr's recent book,[1] the best, I think, that we have in English on the movements now grouped as abstract art. It has the special interest of combining a discussion of general questions about the nature of this art, its esthetic theories, its causes, and even the relation to political movements, with a detailed, matter-of-fact account of the different styles. But although Barr sets out to describe rather than to defend or to criticize abstract art, he seems to accept its theories on their face value in his historical exposition and in certain random judgments. In places he speaks of this art as independent of historical conditions, as realizing the underlying order of nature and as an art of pure form without content.

Hence if the book is largely an account of historical movements, Barr's conception of abstract art remains essentially unhistorical. He gives us, it is true, the dates of every stage in the various movements, as if to enable us to plot a curve, or to follow the emergence of the art year by year, but no connection is drawn between the art and the conditions of the moment. He excludes as irrelevant to its history the nature of the society in which it arose, except as an incidental obstructing or accelerating atmospheric factor. The history of modern art is presented as an internal, immanent process among the artists; abstract art arises because, as the author says, representational art had been exhausted. Out of boredom with "painting facts," the artists turned to abstract art as a pure esthetic activity. "By a common and powerful impulse they were driven to abandon the imitation of natural appearance" just as the artists of the fifteenth century "were moved by a passion for imitating nature." The modern change, however, was "the logical and inevitable conclusion toward which art was moving."

This explanation, which is common in the studios and is defended by some writers in the name of the autonomy of art, is only one instance of a wider view which embraces every field of culture and even economy and politics. At its ordinary level the theory of exhaustion and reaction reduces history to the pattern of popular views on changes in fashion. People grow tired of one color and choose an opposite; one season the skirts are long, and then by reaction they are short. In the same way the present return to objects in painting is explained as the result of the exhaustion of abstract art. All the possibilities of the latter having been explored by Picasso and

1 Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Cubism and Abstract Art* (New York 1936). 248 pages, 223 illustrations. It was published by the Museum of Modern Art as the guide and catalogue of its great exhibition held in the spring of 1936.

Mondrian, there is little left for the younger artists but to take up the painting of objects (Neo-concretism).

The notion that each new style is due to a reaction against a preceding is especially plausible to modern artists, whose work is so often a response to another work, who consider their art a free projection of an irreducible personal feeling, but must form their style in competition against others, with the obsessing sense of the originality of their work as a mark of its sincerity. Besides, the creators of new forms in the last century had almost always to fight against those who practised the old; and several of the historical styles were formed in conscious opposition to another manner—Renaissance against Gothic, Baroque against Mannerism, Neo-classic against Rococo, etc.

The antithetic form of a change does not permit us, however, to judge a new art as a sheer reaction or as the inevitable response to the spending of all the resources of the old. No more than the succession of war and peace implies that war is due to an inherent reaction against peace and peace to a reaction against war. The energies required for the reaction, which sometimes has a drastic and invigorating effect on art, are lost sight of in such an account; it is impossible to explain by it the particular direction and force of the new movement, its specific moment, region and goals. The theory of immanent exhaustion and reaction is inadequate not only because it reduces human activity to a simple mechanical movement, like a bouncing ball, but because in neglecting the sources of energy and the condition of the field, it does not even do justice to its own limited mechanical conception. The oppositeness of a reaction is often an artificial matter, more evident in the polemics between schools or in the schemas of formalistic historians than in the actual historical change. To supply a motor force to this physical history of styles (which pretends to be anti-mechanical), they are reduced to a myth of the perpetual alternating motion of generations, each reacting against its parents and therefore repeating the motions of its grandparents, according to the "grandfather principle" of certain German historians of art. And a final goal, an unexplained but inevitable trend, a destiny rooted in the race or the spirit of the culture or the inherent nature of the art, has to be smuggled in to explain the large unity of a development that embraces so many reacting generations. The immanent purpose steers the reaction when an art seems to veer off the main path because of an overweighted or foreign element. Yet how many arts we know in which the extreme of some quality persists for centuries without provoking the corrective reaction. The "decay" of classical art has been attributed by the English critic, Fry, to its excessive cult of the human body, but this "decay" evidently lasted for hundreds

of years until the moment was ripe for the Christian reaction. But even this Christian art, according to the same writer, was for two centuries indistinguishable from the pagan.

The broad reaction against an existing art is possible only on the ground of its inadequacy to artists with new values and new ways of seeing. But reaction in this internal, antithetic sense, far from being an inherent and universal property of culture, occurs only under impelling historical conditions. For we see that ancient arts, like the Egyptian, the work of anonymous craftsmen, persist for thousands of years with relatively little change, provoking few reactions to the established style; others grow slowly and steadily in a single direction, and still others, in the course of numerous changes, foreign intrusions and reactions preserve a common traditional character. From the mechanical theories of exhaustion, boredom and reaction we could never explain why the reaction occurred when it did. On the other hand, the banal divisions of the great historical styles in literature and art correspond to the momentous divisions in the history of society.

If we consider an art that is near us in time and is still widely practised, like Impressionism, we will see how empty is the explanation of the subsequent arts by reaction. From a logical viewpoint the antithesis to Impressionism depends on how Impressionism is defined. Whereas the later schools attacked the Impressionists as mere photographers of sunshine, the contemporaries of Impressionism abused it for its monstrous unreality. The Impressionists were in fact the first painters of whom it was charged that their works made as little sense right side up as up side down. The movements after Impressionism take different directions, some toward simplified natural forms, others toward their complete decomposition; both are sometimes described as historical reactions against Impressionism, one restoring the objects that Impressionism dissolved, the other restoring the independent imaginative activity that Impressionism sacrificed to the imitation of nature.

Actually, in the 1880's there were several aspects of Impressionism which could be the starting points of new tendencies and goals of reaction. For classicist painters the weakness of Impressionism lay in its unclarity, its destruction of definite linear forms; it is in this sense that Renoir turned for a time from Impressionism to Ingres. But for other artists at the same moment Impressionism was too casual and unmethodical; these, the neo-Impressionists, preserved the Impressionist colorism, carrying it even further in an unclassical sense, but also in a more constructive and calculated way. For still others, Impressionism was too photographic, too impersonal; these, the symbolists and their followers, required an emphatic sentiment

and esthetic activism in the work. There were finally artists for whom Impressionism was too unorganized, and their reaction underscored a schematic arrangement. Common to most of these movements after Impressionism was the absolutizing of the artist's state of mind or sensibility as prior to and above objects. If the Impressionists reduced things to the artist's sensations, their successors reduced them further to projections or constructions of his feelings and moods, or to "essences" grasped in a violent and tense intuition.

The historical fact is that the reaction against Impressionism came in the 1880's before some of its most original possibilities had been realized. The painting of series of chromatic variations of a single motif (the Haystacks, the Cathedral) dates from the 1890's; and the Water Lilies, with their remarkable spatial forms, related in some ways to contemporary abstract art, belong to the twentieth century. The effective reaction against Impressionism took place only at a certain moment in its history and chiefly in France, though Impressionism was fairly widespread in Europe by the end of the century. In the 1880's, when Impressionism was beginning to be accepted officially, there were already several groups of young artists in France to whom it was uncongenial. The history of art is not, however, a history of single willful reactions, every new artist taking a stand opposite the last, painting brightly if the other painted dully, flattening if the other modelled, and distorting if the other was literal. The reactions were deeply motivated in the experience of the artists, in a changing world with which they had to come to terms and which shaped their practice and ideas in specific ways.

The tragic lives of Gauguin and van Gogh, their estrangement from society, which so profoundly colored their art, were no automatic reactions to Impressionism or the consequences of Peruvian or Northern blood. In Gauguin's circle were other artists who had abandoned a bourgeois career in their maturity or who had attempted suicide. For a young man of the middle class to wish to live by art meant a different thing in 1885 than in 1860. By 1885 only artists had freedom and integrity, but often they had nothing else. The very existence of Impressionism which transformed nature into a private, unformalized field for sensitive vision, shifting with the spectator, made painting an ideal domain of freedom; it attracted many who were tied unhappily to middle class jobs and moral standards, now increasingly problematic and stultifying with the advance of monopoly capitalism. But Impressionism in isolating the sensibility as a more or less personal, but dispassionate and still outwardly directed, organ of fugitive distinctions in distant dissolving clouds, water and sunlight, could no longer suffice for men who had staked everything on im-

pulse and whose resolution to become artists was a poignant and in some ways demoralizing break with good society. With an almost moral fervor they transformed Impressionism into an art of vehement expression, of emphatic, brilliant, magnified, obsessing objects, or adjusted its coloring and surface pattern to dreams of a seasonless exotic world of idyllic freedom.

Early Impressionism, too, had a moral aspect. In its unconventionalized, unregulated vision, in its discovery of a constantly changing phenomenal outdoor world of which the shapes depended on the momentary position of the casual or mobile spectator, there was an implicit criticism of symbolic social and domestic formalities, or at least a norm opposed to these. It is remarkable how many pictures we have in early Impressionism of informal and spontaneous sociability, of breakfasts, picnics, promenades, boating trips, holidays and vacation travel. These urban idylls not only present the objective forms of bourgeois recreation in the 1860's and 1870's; they also reflect in the very choice of subjects and in the new esthetic devices the conception of art as solely a field of individual enjoyment, without reference to ideas and motives, and they presuppose the cultivation of these pleasures as the highest field of freedom for an enlightened bourgeois detached from the official beliefs of his class. In enjoying realistic pictures of his surroundings as a spectacle of traffic and changing atmospheres, the cultivated rentier was experiencing in its phenomenal aspect that mobility of the environment, the market and of industry to which he owed his income and his freedom. And in the new Impressionist techniques which broke things up into finely discriminated points of color, as well as in the "accidental" momentary vision, he found, in a degree hitherto unknown in art, conditions of sensibility closely related to those of the urban promenader and the refined consumer of luxury goods.

As the contexts of bourgeois sociability shifted from community, family and church to commercialized or privately improvised forms—the streets, the cafés and resorts—the resulting consciousness of individual freedom involved more and more an estrangement from older ties; and those imaginative members of the middle class who accepted the norms of freedom, but lacked the economic means to attain them, were spiritually torn by a sense of helpless isolation in an anonymous indifferent mass. By 1880 the enjoying individual becomes rare in Impressionist art; only the private spectacle of nature is left. And in neo-Impressionism, which restores and even monumentalizes the figures, the social group breaks up into isolated spectators, who do not communicate with each other, or consists of mechanically repeated dances submitted to a preordained movement with little spontaneity.

The French artists of the 1880's and 1890's who attacked Impressionism for its lack of structure often expressed demands for salvation, for order and fixed objects of belief, foreign to the Impressionists as a group. The title of Gauguin's picture—"Where do we come from? Where are we? Where are we going?"—with its interrogative form, is typical of this state of mind. But since the artists did not know the underlying economic and social causes of their own disorder and moral insecurity, they could envisage new stabilizing forms only as quasi-religious beliefs or as a revival of some primitive or highly ordered traditional society with organs for a collective spiritual life. This is reflected in their taste for medieval and primitive art, their conversions to Catholicism and later to "integral nationalism." The colonies of artists formed at this period, Van Gogh's project of a communal life for artists, are examples of this groping to reconstitute the pervasive human sociability that capitalism had destroyed. Even their theories of "composition"—a traditional concept abandoned by the Impressionists—are related to their social views, for they conceive of composition as an assembly of objects bound together by a principle of order emanating, on the one hand, from the eternal nature of art, on the other, from the state of mind of the artist, but in both instances requiring a "deformation" of the objects. Some of them wanted a canvas to be like a church, to possess a hierarchy of forms, stationed objects, a prescribed harmony, preordained paths of vision, all issuing, however, from the artist's feeling. In recreating the elements of community in their art they usually selected inert objects, or active objects without meaningful interaction except as colors and lines.

These problems are posed to some extent, though solved differently, even in the work of Seurat whose relation to the economic development was in many ways distinct from that of the painters of the Symbolist and Synthetist groups. Instead of rebelling against the moral consequences of capitalism he attached himself like a contented engineer to its progressive technical side and accepted the popular forms of lower class recreation and commercialized entertainment as the subjects of a monumentalized art. From the current conceptions of technology he drew the norms of a methodical procedure in painting, bringing Impressionism up to date in the light of the latest findings of science.

There were, of course, other kinds of painting in France beside those described. But a detailed investigation of the movement of art would show, I think, that these, too, and even the conservative, academic painting were affected by the changed conditions of the time. The reactions against Impressionism, far from being inherent in the nature of art, issued from the responses that artists as artists made to the broader situation in which they

found themselves, but which they themselves had not produced. If the tendencies of the arts after Impressionism toward an extreme subjectivism and abstraction are already evident in Impressionism, it is because the isolation of the individual and of the higher forms of culture from their older social supports, the renewed ideological oppositions of mind and nature, individual and society, proceed from social and economic causes which already existed before Impressionism and which are even sharper today. It is, in fact, a part of the popular attraction of Van Gogh and Gauguin that their work incorporates (and with a far greater energy and formal coherence than the works of other artists) evident longings, tensions and values which are shared today by thousands who in one way or another have experienced the same conflicts as these artists.

II

The logical opposition of realistic and abstract art by which Barr explains the more recent change rests on two assumptions about the nature of painting, common in writing on abstract art—that representation is a passive mirroring of things and therefore essentially non-artistic, and that abstract art, on the other hand, is a purely esthetic activity, unconditioned by objects and based on its own eternal laws. The abstract painter denounces representation of the outer world as a mechanical process of the eye and the hand in which the artist's feelings and imagination have little part. Or in a Platonic manner he opposes to the representation of objects, as a rendering of the surface aspect of nature, the practice of abstract design, as a discovery of the "essence" or underlying mathematical order of things. He assumes further that the mind is most completely itself when it is independent of external objects. If he, nevertheless, values certain works of older naturalistic art, he sees in them only independent formal constructions; he overlooks the imaginative aspects of the devices for transposing the space of experience on to the space of the canvas, and the immense, historically developed, capacity to hold the world in mind. He abstracts the artistic qualities from the represented objects and their meanings, and looks on these as unavoidable impurities, imposed historical elements with which the artist was burdened and in spite of which he finally achieved his underlying, personal abstract expression.

These views are thoroughly one-sided and rest on a mistaken idea of what a representation is. There is no passive, "photographic" representation in the sense described; the scientific elements of representation in older art —perspective, anatomy, light-and-shade—are ordering principles and expressive means as well as devices of rendering. All renderings of objects,

no matter how exact they seem, even photographs, proceed from values, methods and viewpoints which somehow shape the image and often determine its contents. On the other hand, there is no "pure art," unconditioned by experience; all fantasy and formal construction, even the random scribbling of the hand, are shaped by experience and by non-esthetic concerns.

This is clear enough from the example of the Impressionists mentioned above. They could be seen as both photographic and fantastic, according to the viewpoint of the observer. Even their motifs of nature were denounced as meaningless beside the evident content of romantic and classicist art.

In regarding representation as a facsimile of nature, the abstract artist has taken over the error of vulgar nineteenth century criticism, which judged painting by an extremely narrow criterion of reality, inapplicable even to the realistic painting which it accepted. If the older taste said, how exactly like the object, how beautiful!—the modern abstractionist says, how exactly like the object, how ugly! The two are not completely opposed, however, in their premises, and will appear to be related if compared with the taste of religious arts with a supernatural content. Both realism and abstraction affirm the sovereignty of the artist's mind, the first, in the capacity to recreate the world minutely in a narrow, intimate field by series of abstract calculations of perspective and gradation of color, the other in the capacity to impose new forms on nature, to manipulate the abstracted elements of line and color freely, or to create shapes corresponding to subtle states of mind. But as little as a work is guaranteed esthetically by its resemblance to nature, so little is it guaranteed by its abstractness or "purity." Nature and abstract forms are both materials for art, and the choice of one or the other flows from historically changing interests.

Barr believes that painting is impoverished by the exclusion of the outer world from pictures, losing a whole range of sentimental, sexual, religious and social values. But he supposes in turn that the esthetic values are then available in a pure form. He does not see, however, that the latter are changed rather than purified by this exclusion; just as the kind of verbal pattern in writing designed mainly for verbal pattern differs from the verbal pattern in more meaningful prose. Various forms, qualities of space, color, light, scale, modelling and movement, which depend on the appreciation of aspects of nature and human life, disappear from painting; and similarly the esthetic of abstract art discovers new qualities and relationships which are congenial to the minds that practice such an exclusion. Far from creating an absolute form, each type of abstract art, as of naturalistic art, gives a

special but temporary importance to some element, whether color, surface, outline or arabesque, or to some formal method. The converse of Barr's argument, that by clothing a pure form with a meaningful dress this form becomes more accessible or palatable, like logic or mathematics presented through concrete examples, rests on the same misconception. Just as narrative prose is not simply a story added to a preexisting, pure prose form that can be disengaged from the sense of the words, so a representation is not a natural form added to an abstract design. Even the schematic aspects of the form in such a work already possess qualities conditioned by the modes of seeing objects and designing representations, not to mention the content and the emotional attitudes of the painter.

When the abstractionist Kandinsky was trying to create an art expressing mood, a great deal of conservative, academic painting was essentially just that. But the academic painter, following older traditions of romantic art, preserved the objects which provoked the mood; if he wished to express a mood inspired by a landscape, he painted the landscape itself. Kandinsky, on the other hand, wished to find an entirely imaginative equivalent of the mood; he would not go beyond the state of mind and a series of expressive colors and shapes, independent of things. The mood in the second case is very different from the first mood. A mood which is partly identified with the conditioning object, a mood dominated by clear images of detailed objects and situations, and capable of being revived and communicated to others through these images, is different in feeling tone, in relation to self-consciousness, attentiveness and potential activity, from a mood that is independent of an awareness of fixed, external objects, but sustained by a random flow of private and incommunicable associations. Kandinsky looks upon the mood as wholly a function of his personality or some special faculty of his spirit; and he selects colors and patterns which have for him the strongest correspondence to his state of mind, precisely because they are not tied sensibly to objects, but emerge freely from his excited fantasy. They are the concrete evidences, thrown up from within, of the internality of his mood, its independence of the outer world. Yet the external objects which underly the mood may re-emerge in the abstraction in a masked or distorted form. The most responsive spectator is then the individual who is similarly concerned with himself and who finds in such pictures not only the counterpart of his own tension, but a final discharge of obsessing feelings.

In renouncing or drastically distorting natural shapes the abstract painter makes a judgment of the external world. He says that such and such aspects of experience are alien to art and to the higher realities of form; he disqualifies them from art. But by this very act the mind's view

of itself and of its art, the intimate contexts of this repudiation of objects, become directing factors in art. When personality, feeling and formal sensibility are absolutized, the values which underly or which follow today from such attitudes suggest new formal problems, just as the secular interests of the later middle ages made possible a whole series of new formal types of space and the human figure. The qualities of cryptic improvisation, the microscopic intimacy of textures, points and lines, the impulsively scribbled forms, the mechanical precision in constructing irreducible, incommensurable fields, the thousand and one ingenious formal devices of dissolution, penetration, immateriality and incompleteness, which affirm the abstract artist's active sovereignty over objects, these and many other sides of modern art are discovered experimentally by painters who seek freedom outside of nature and society and consciously negate the formal aspects of perception—like the connectedness of shape and color or the discontinuity of object and surroundings—that enter into the practical relations of man in nature.

We can judge more readily the burden of contemporary experience that imposes such forms by comparing them with the abstract devices in Renaissance art, especially the systems of perspective and the canons of proportion, which are today misunderstood as merely imitative means. In the Renaissance the development of linear perspective was intimately tied to the exploration of the world and the renewal of physical and geographical science. Just as for the aggressive members of the burgher class a realistic knowledge of the geographical world and communications entailed the ordering of spatial connections in a reliable system, so the artists strove to realize in their own imaginative field, even within the limits of a traditional religious content, the most appropriate and stimulating forms of spatial order, with the extensiveness, traversability and regulation valued by their class. And similarly, as this same burgher class, emerging from a Christian feudal society, began to assert the prority of sensual and natural to ascetic and supernatural goods, and idealized the human body as the real locus of values—enjoying images of the powerful or beautiful nude human being as the real man or woman, without sign of rank or submission to authority—so the artists derived from this valuation of the human being artistic ideals of energy and massiveness of form which they embodied in robust, active or potentially active, human figures. And even the canons of proportion, which seem to submit the human form to a mysticism of number, create purely secular standards of perfection; for through these canons the norms of humanity become physical and measurable, therefore at the same time sensual and intellectual, in contrast to the older medieval disjunction of the body and the mind.

If today an abstract painter seems to draw like a child or a madman, it is not because he is childish or mad. He has come to value as qualities related to his own goals of imaginative freedom the passionless spontaneity and technical insouciance of the child, who creates for himself alone, without the pressure of adult responsibility and practical adjustments. And smilarly, the resemblance to psychopathic art, which is only approximate and usually independent of a conscious imitation, rests on their common freedom of fantasy, uncontrolled by reference to an external physical and social world. By his very practice of abstract art, in which forms are improvised and deliberately distorted or obscured, the painter opens the field to the suggestions of his suppressed interior life. But the painter's manipulation of his fantasy must differ from the child's or psychopath's in so far as the very act of designing is his chief occupation and the conscious source of his human worth; it acquires a burden of energy, a sustained pathos and firmness of execution foreign to the others.

The attitude to primitive art is in this respect very significant. The nineteenth century, with its realistic art, its rationalism and curiosity about production, materials and techniques often appreciated primitive ornament, but considered primitive representation monstrous. It was as little acceptable to an enlightened mind as the fetishism or magic which these images sometimes served. Abstract painters, on the other hand, have been relatively indifferent to the primitive geometrical styles of ornament. The distinctness of motifs, the emblematic schemes, the clear order of patterns, the direct submission to handicraft and utility, are foreign to modern art. But in the distorted, fantastic figures some groups of modern artists found an intimate kinship with their own work; unlike the ordering devices of ornament which were tied to the practical making of things, the forms of these figures seemed to have been shaped by a ruling fantasy, independent of nature and utility, and directed by obsessive feelings. The highest praise of their own work is to describe it in the language of magic and fetishism.

This new responsiveness to primitive art was evidently more than esthetic; a whole complex of longings, moral values and broad conceptions of life were fulfilled in it. If colonial imperialism made these primitive objects physically accessible, they could have little esthetic interest until the new formal conceptions arose. But these formal conceptions could be relevant to primitive art only when charged with the new valuations of the instinctive, the natural, the mythical and the essentially human, which affected even the description of primitive art. The older ethnologists, who had investigated the materials and tribal contexts of primitive imagery, usually ignored the subjective and esthetic side in its creation; in discovering the latter the modern critics with an equal one-sidedness relied on

feeling to penetrate these arts. The very fact that they were the arts of primitive peoples without a recorded history now made them all the more attractive. They acquired the special prestige of the timeless and the instinctive, on the level of spontaneous animal activity, self-contained, unreflective, private, without dates and signatures, without origins or consequences except in the emotions. A devaluation of history, civilized society and external nature lies behind the new passion for primitive art. Time ceased to be an historical dimension; it became an internal psychological moment, and the whole mess of material ties, the nightmare of a determining world, the disquieting sense of the present as a dense historical point to which the individual was fatefully bound, these were automatically transcended in thought by the conception of an instinctive, elemental art above time. By a remarkable process the arts of subjugated backward peoples, discovered by Europeans in conquering the world, became esthetic norms to those who renounced it. The imperialist expansion was accompanied at home by a profound cultural pessimism in which the arts of the savage victims were elevated above the highest traditions of Europe. The colonies became places to flee to as well as to exploit.

The new respect for primitive art was progressive, however, in that the cultures of savages and other backward peoples were now regarded as human cultures, and a high creativeness, far from being a prerogative of the advanced societies of the West, was attributed to all human groups. But this insight was accompanied not only by a flight from the advanced society, but also by an indifference to just those material conditions which were brutally destroying the primitive peoples or converting them into submissive, cultureless slaves. Further, the preservation of certain forms of native culture in the interest of imperialist power could be supported in the name of the new artistic attitudes by those who thought themselves entirely free from political interest.

III

To say then that abstract painting is simply a reaction against the exhausted imitation of nature, or that it is the discovery of an absolute or pure field of form is to overlook the positive character of the art, its underlying energies and sources of movement. Besides, the movement of abstract art is too comprehensive and long-prepared, too closely related to similar movements in literature and philosophy, which have quite other technical conditions, and finally, too varied according to time and place, to be considered a self-contained development issuing by a kind of internal logic directly from esthetic problems. It bears within itself at almost every

point the mark of the changing material and psychological conditions surrounding modern culture.

The avowals of artists—several of which are cited in Barr's work—show that the step to abstraction was accompanied by great tension and emotional excitement. The painters justify themselves by ethical and metaphysical standpoints, or in defense of their art attack the preceding style as the counterpart of a detested social or moral position. Not the processes of imitating nature were exhausted, but the valuation of nature itself had changed. The philosophy of art was also a philosophy of life.

1. The Russian painter Malevitch, the founder of "Suprematism," has described his new art in revealing terms. "By Suprematism I mean the supremacy of pure feeling or sensation in the pictorial arts. . . . In the year 1913 in my desperate struggle to free art from the ballast of the objective world I fled to the form of the Square and exhibited a picture which was nothing more or less than a black square upon a white ground. . . . It was no empty square which I had exhibited but rather the experience of objectlessness" (Barr, pp. 122-23).

Later in 1918 he painted in Moscow a series called White on White, including a white square on a white surface. In their purity these paintings seemed to parallel the efforts of mathematicians to reduce all mathematics to arithmetic and arithmetic to logic. But there is a burden of feeling underlying this "geometrical" art, which may be judged from the related paintings with the titles Sensation of Metallic Sounds, Feeling of Flight, Feeling of Infinite Space. Even in the work labelled Composition we can see how the formal character of the abstraction rests on the desire to isolate and externalize in a concrete fashion subjective, professional elements of the older practice of painting, a desire which issues in turn from the conflicts and insecurity of the artist and his conception of art as an absolutely private realm. Barr analyzes a composition of two squares as a "study in equivalents: the red square, smaller but more intense in color and more active in its diagonal axis, holds its own against the black square which is larger but negative in color and static in position." Although he characterizes this kind of painting as pure abstraction to distinguish it from geometrical designs which are ultimately derived from some representation, he overlooks the relation of this painting to a work by Malevitch reproduced in his book—The Woman With the Water Pails, dating from 1912. The peasant woman, designed in Cubist style, balances two pails hanging from a rod across her shoulders. Here the preoccupation with balance as a basic esthetic principle governing the relations of two counterpart units is embodied in an "elemental" genre subject; the objects balanced are not human, but suspended, non-organic elements, unarticulated

forms. Although the human theme is merely allusive and veiled by the Cubist procedure, the very choice of the motif of the peasant woman with the water pails betrays a sexual interest and the emotional context of the artist's tendency toward his particular style of abstraction.

The importance of the subjective conditions of the artist's work in the formation of abstract styles may be verified in the corresponding relationship between Cubist and pre-Cubist art. Picasso, just before Cubism, represented melancholy circus acrobats, harlequins, actors, musicians, beggars, usually at home on the fringes of society, or rehearsing among themselves, as bohemian artists detached from the stage of public performance. He shows in one picture two acrobats balancing themselves, the one mature and massive, squared in body, seated firmly on a cubic mass of stone shaped like his own figure; the young girl, slender, an outlined, unmodelled form, balancing herself unstably on tiptoes on a spherical stone. The experience of balance vital to the acrobat, his very life, in fact, is here assimilated to the subjective experience of the artist, an expert performer concerned with the adjustment of lines and masses as the essence of his art—a formalized personal activity which estranges him from society and to which he gives up his life. Between this art and Cubism, where the figure finally disappears, giving way to small geometrical elements formed from musical instruments, drinking vessels, playing-cards and other artificial objects of private manipulation, there is a phase of negroid figures in which the human physiognomy is patterned on primitive or savage faces and the body reduced to an impersonal nudity of harsh, drastic lines. This figure-type is not taken from life, not even from the margins of society, but from art; this time, however, from the art of a savage, isolated people, regarded everywhere as inferior and valued only as exotic spectacles or entertainers, except by the painters to whom they are pure, unspoiled artists, creating from instinct or a native sensibility.

In the light of this analysis we can hardly accept Barr's account of Malevitch's step to abstraction: "Malevitch suddenly foresaw the logical and inevitable conclusion towards which European art was moving" and drew a black square on a white ground.

2. In his book *Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst,* published in 1912, the painter Kandinsky, one of the very first to create completely abstract pictures, speaks constantly of inner necessity as alone determining the choice of elements, just as inner freedom, he tells us, is the sole criterion in ethics. He does not say that representation has been exhausted, but that the material world is illusory and foreign to the spirit; his art is a rebellion against the "materialism" of modern society, in which he includes science and the socialist movement. "When religion, science and morality (the last

through the strong hand of Nietzsche) are shaken, and when the outer supports threaten to fall, man turns his gaze away from the external and towards himself." In his own time he respects, as interests parallel to his own and similarly motivated, theosophy, occultism, the cult of the primitive and experiments of synesthesia. Colored audition is important to him because perception is then blurred and localized in the perceiver rather than identified with an external source. His more esthetic comments are usually of a piece with these attitudes. "The green, yellow, red tree in the meadow is only . . . an accidental materialized form of the tree which we feel in ourselves when we hear the word tree." And in describing one of his first abstract pictures he says: "This entire description is chiefly an analysis of the picture which I have painted rather subconsciously in a state of strong inner tension. So intensively do I feel the necessity of some of the forms that I remember having given loud-voiced directions to myself, as for instance: 'But the corners must be heavy.' The observer must learn to look at the picture as a graphic representation of a mood and not as a representation of objects" (Barr, p. 66).

More recently he has written: "Today a point sometimes says more in a painting than a human figure. . . . Man has developed a new faculty which permits him to go beneath the skin of nature and touch its essence, its content. . . . The painter needs discreet, silent, almost insignificant objects. . . . How silent is an apple beside Laocoon. A circle is even more silent" (*Cahiers d'Art,* vol. VI, 1931, p. 351).

3. I will now quote a third avowal of artists tending toward abstraction, but this time of aggressive artists, the Italian Futurists, who can hardly be charged with the desire to escape from the world.

"It is from Italy that we launch . . . our manifesto of revolutionary and incendiary violence with which we found today il Futurismo. . . . Exalt every kind of originality, of boldness, of extreme violence. . . . Take and glorify the life of today, incesantly and tumultuously transformed by the triumphs of science. . . . A speeding automobile is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace" (Barr, p. 54).

Barr, who overlooks the moral, ideological aspect in Malevitch and Kandinsky, cannot help observing in the Italian movement relations to Bergson, Nietzsche and even to fascism; and in analyzing the forms of Futurist art he tries to show they embody the qualities asserted in the manifestos.

But if Futurism has an obvious ideological aspect, it is not a pure abstract art for Barr. It is "near-abstraction," for it refers overtly to a world outside the canvas and still retains elements of representation.

Yet the forms of "pure" abstract art, which seem to be entirely without

trace of representation or escapist morbidity—the neo-plasticist works of Mondrian and the later designs of the Constructivists and Suprematists—are admittedly influenced in their material aspect, as textures and shapes, and in their expressive qualities of precision, impersonal finish and neatness (and even in subtler informalities of design), by the current conceptions and norms of the machine.

Neither Futurism nor the "purer" mechanical abstract forms can be explained, however, as a simple reflection of the existing machines. Although machines have existed since ancient times and have had a central place in production in some countries for over a century, this art is peculiar to the last twenty-five years. In the middle of the 19th century when the machines were already hailed as the great works of modern art, superior to the paintings of the time, the taste of progressive industrialists was towards a realistic art, and Proudhon could celebrate as the real modern works the pictures of Courbet and the newest machines. Not even the personal preoccupation with machines necessarily leads by itself to a style of mechanical abstract forms; the inventors Alexander Nasmyth, Robert Fulton and Samuel Morse were fairly naturalistic painters, like Leonardo, one of the fathers of modern technology. The French art of the period of mechanistic philosophy, the 17th century, was dominated by idealized naturalistic human forms. And the conception of man as a machine current in France during the predominance of the unmechanical rococo style was identified by its defenders and critics with a matter-of-fact sensualism. The enemies of La Mettrie, the author of *Man the Machine,* were pleased to point out that he died of over-eating.

More significant, however, is the fact that in recent times the advanced industrial countries with the most developed technologies, the United States and England, did not originate styles of mechanical abstraction; they are also the most backward in functionalist abstraction of forms in architecture. On the other hand, the development of such arts takes place in Russia, Italy, Holland and France; and only later in Germany. Hence the explanation of the arts as a reflection of existing machines is certainly inadequate. It could not explain above all the differences in "machine-styles" from place to place at a moment when technology has an international character. In Detroit, the murals of machines by Rivera are realistic images of the factory as a world operated by workers; in Paris Léger decomposes the elements of machines into Cubist abstractions or assimilates living things to the typical rigid shapes of machines; the Dadaists improvise a whimsical burlesque with robots or reconstructed men; in Holland the neo-plasticists construct their works of quasi-architectural units; in Germany the Constructivist-Suprematist forms ape the drawings and models of the

machine designer, rather than the machines themselves. And the Futurists, in distinction from all of these, try to recapture the phenomenal aspect of moving mechanisms, of energy and speed.

These differences are not simply a matter of different local artistic traditions operating on a common modern material. For if this were the case, we should expect a Mondrian in Italy, the country of Renaissance tradition of clarified forms, and the Futurists in Holland and England, the pioneer lands of Impressionism.

A similar criticism would apply to the corresponding derivation of abstraction in art from the abstract nature of modern finance, in which bits of paper control capital and all human transactions assume the form of operations on numbers and titles. Here again we observe that the United States and England, with the most highly developed financial capitalism, are among the last countries to produce abstract art.

Mechanical abstract forms arise in modern art not because modern production is mechanical, but because of the values assigned to the human being and the machine in the ideologies projected by the conflicting interests and situation in society, which vary from country to country. Thus the modern conception of man as a machine is more economic than biological in its accent. It refers to the human robot rather than to the human animal, and suggests an efficient control of the costly movements of the body, a submission to some external purpose indifferent to the individual; unlike the older mechanistic views which concerned man's passions, explained them by internal mechanical forces, and sometimes deduced an ethics of pleasure, utility and self-interest.

Barr recognizes the importance of local conditions when he attributes the deviations of one of the Futurists to his Parisian experience. But he makes no effort to explain why this art should emerge in Italy rather than elsewhere. The Italian writers have described it as a reaction against the traditionalism and sleepiness of Italy during the rule of Umberto, and in doing so have overlooked the positive sources of this reaction and its effects on Italian life. The backwardness was most intensely felt to be a contradiction and became a provoking issue towards 1910 and then mainly in the North, which had recently experienced the most rapid industrial development. At this moment Italian capitalism was preparing the imperialist war in Tripoli. Italy, poor in resources yet competing with world empires, urgently required expansion to attain the levels of the older capitalist countries. The belated growth of industry, founded on exploitation of the peasantry, had intensified the disparities of culture, called into being a strong proletariat, and promoted imperialist adventures. There arose at this time, in response to the economic growth of the country and the rapid changes

in the older historical environment, philosophies of process and utility—a militant pragmatism of an emphatic anti-traditionalist character. Sections of the middle class which had acquired new functions and modern urban interests accepted the new conditions as progressive and "modern," and were often the loudest in denouncing Italian backwardness and calling for an up-to-date, nationally conscious Italy. The attack of the intellectuals against the provincial aristocratic traditions was in keeping with the interest of the dominant class; they elevated technical progress, aggressive individuality and the relativism of values into theories favorable to imperialist expansion, obscuring the contradictory results of the latter and the conflicts between classes by abstract ideological oppositions of the old and the modern or the past and the future. Since the national consciousness of Italy had rested for generations on her museums, her old cities and artistic inheritance, the modernizing of the country entailed a cultural conflict, which assumed its sharpest form among the artists. Machines as the most advanced instruments of modern production had a special attraction for artists exasperated by their own merely traditional and secondary status, their mediocre outlook in a backward provincial Italy. They were devoted to machines not so much as instruments of production as the sources of mobility in modern life. While the perception of industrial processes led the workers, who participated in them directly, toward a radical social philosophy, the artists, who were detached from production, like the petty bourgeoisie, could know these processes abstractly or phenomenally, in their products and outward appearance, in the form of traffic, automobiles, railroads, and new cities and in the tempo of urban life, rather than in their social causes. The Futurists thus came to idealize movement as such, and they conceived this movement or generalized mobility mainly as mechanical phenomena in which the forms of objects are blurred or destroyed. The dynamism of an auto, centrifugal motion, the dog in movement (with twenty legs), the autobus, the evolution of forms in space, the armored train in battle, the dance hall—these were the typical subjects of Futurist art. The field of the canvas was charged with radiating lines, symbolic graphs of pervading force, colliding and interpenetrating objects. Whereas the mobility in Impressionism was a spectacle for relaxed enjoyment, in Futurism it is urgent and violent, a precursor of war.

Several of the Futurist devices, and the larger idea of abstract and interpenetrating forms, undoubtedly come from Cubism. But, significantly, the Italians found Cubism too estheticized and intellectual, lacking a principle of movement; they could accept, however, the Cubist dissolution of stable, clearly bounded forms. This had a direct ideological value, though essentially an esthetic device, for the stable and clear were very defin-

itely identified with the older Italian art as well as with the past as such.

Outside Italy, and especially after the World War, the qualities of the machine as a rigid constructed object, and the qualities of its products and of the engineer's design suggested various forms to painters, and even the larger expressive characters of their work. The older categories of art were translated into the languge of modern technology; the essential was identified with the efficient, the unit with the standardized element, texture with new materials, representation with photography, drawing with the ruled or mechanically traced line, color with the flat coat of paint and design with the model or the instructing plan. The painters thus tied their useless archaic activity to the most advanced and imposing forms of modern production; and precisely because technology was conceived abstractly as an independent force with its own inner conditions, and the designing engineer as the real maker of the modern world, the step from their earlier Expressionist, Cubist or Suprematist abstraction to the more technological style was not a great one. (Even Kandinsky and Malevitch changed during the 1920's under the influence of these conceptions.) In applying their methods of design to architecture, printing, the theatre and the industrial arts they remained abstract artists. They often looked upon their work as the esthetic counterpart of the abstract calculations of the engineer and the scientist. If they admitted an alternative art of fantasy—in some ways formally related to their own—it was merely as a residual field of freedom or as a hygienic relaxation from the rigors of their own efficiency. Unlike the Futurists, whose conception of progress was blindly insurgent, they wished to reconstruct culture through the logic of sober technique and design; and in this wish they considered themselves the indispensable esthetic prophets of a new order in life. Some of them supported the Bolshevik revolution, many more collaborated with the social-democratic and liberal reformist architects of Germany and Holland. Their conception of technology as a norm in art was largely conditioned, on the one hand, by the stringent rationalization of industry in post-war Europe in the drive to reduce costs and widen the market as the only hope of a strangling capitalism threatened by American domination, and, on the other hand, by the reformist illusion, which was especially widespread in the brief period of post-war prosperity during this economic impasse, that the technological advance, in raising the living standards of the people, in lowering the costs of housing and other necessities, would resolve the conflict of classes, or at any rate form in the technicians habits of efficient, economic planning, conducive to a peaceful transition to socialism. Architecture or Revolution! That was in fact one of the slogans of Le Corbusier, the architect, painter and editor of the magazine *L'Esprit Nouveau.*

With the approach of the crisis of the 1930's critics like Elie Faure called on painters to abandon their art and become engineers; and architects, in America as well as Europe, sensitive to the increasing economic pressure, though ignorant of its causes, identified architecture with engineering, denying the architect any conscious esthetic function. In these extreme views, which were shared by reformists of technocratic tendency, we can see the debacle of the optimistic machine-ideologies in modern culture. As production is curtailed and living standards reduced, even art is renounced in the name of technical progress.

During the crisis the mechanical abstract styles have become secondary. They influence very few young artists, or they tend toward what Barr calls "biomorphic abstraction," of a violent or nervous calligraphy, or with amoeboid forms, a soft, low-grade matter pulsing in an empty space. An anti-rationalist style, Surrealism, which had issued from the Dadaist art of the 1917-23 period, becomes predominant and beside it arise new romantic styles, with pessimistic imagery of empty spaces, bones, grotesque beings, abandoned buildings and catastrophic earth formations.

New Aspects of Cyclical Crises[1]

BY BERTRAM D. WOLFE

THE development of monopoly capitalism and imperialism have profoundly altered the structure of the capitalist system. These structural changes could not but alter the outlines of the cyclical crisis, for the cyclical crisis is the focal mechanism of all the contradictory tendencies inhering in the present economic system.

A crisis today no longer presents the precise configurations of the classic picture of a crisis as portrayed by Marx. Hence we would expect to find a mass of literature, both non-Marxist and Marxist, dealing with the specifically new in the structure of the economic cycle. But such is the condition of Marxism at present, that in the midst of the profoundest crisis in the history of capitalism, there has been little, almost no discussion of these changes. And as for bourgeois economics, it has still less to contribute to this discussion (except for a certain amount of empirical-statistical material), for bourgeois economic theory has never squarely faced its central economic problem. That crises involve the very differentiae that distinguish capitalism from all other economic systems, should be evident as soon as it is realized that only under an unplanned, undirected, market and profit economy, *i.e.* only under capitalism, have such crises of "overproduction" or "plenty" been either possible or of regular and necessary occurrence. But bourgeois economic theory has been hamstrung by its outlook and by its methodology. Its equilibrium theory is a fictional *"as-if"* theory, which sets out to discuss how the system would work if it were free, not from mere aberrations, but from all inherent contradictory tendencies. Thus it ignores the very specific traits that distinguish capitalism from other economic systems and that lie at the heart of the phenomena of crises. A method of approach that treats production for the market and for profit *as-if* it were production for use, will inevitably be impotent before the central phenomena and distinguishing characteristics of the present system, powerless to predict crises, powerless to foresee their course, ex-

1 This article is a general survey of crises under monopoly capitalism, preliminary to more detailed surveys to be made by the author and others in the pages of the *Marxist Quarterly.*

plain their nature, formulate their laws, or even investigate adequately their actual configuration.

The "Disappearing" Crisis

With the advent of modern trustification and monopoly, professional economic theory began to take more notice of crises, but only for the purpose of declaring that trustification was moderating and tending to eliminate the business cycle, or its depression phase, altogether. Thus Sombart early declared:

"The crisis of 1857 was the last catastrophe on a grand scale. And since then there exists the obvious tendency in European economic life to equalize contradictions, to soften them away, to make them disappear."[2]

Jean Lescure,[3] perhaps France's outstanding authority in this field, declared in 1907:

"If we want to judge the future in accordance with the experience of the United States, we will come to the conclusion that economies which are organized into trusts and associations of trusts will be spared by crises."[4]

The same contentions as to the softening and gradual elimination of crises as a result of trustification were advanced by Cassel, by Tugan-Baranowski and in America by Tugwell, Carver, Fisher—culminating in the years prior to 1929 in the paeans of European economists to "crisis-less" American capitalism and in the official hymns of certitude of American economists, bankers and financial experts.[5] Then came the crash of 1929!

Nor was Social Democratic economic theory exempt from the delusion that imperialism and trustification were moderating and tending to eliminate the cyclical crisis. The revisionists, at the very dawn of the modern imperialist epoch, asserted that Marx was outmoded in this as in other respects. Karl Kautsky, who answered Eduard Bernstein in 1902 by an attempt to prove that "crises are growing ever sharper and more ex-

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2 Werner Sombart, *Das Wirtschaftsleben im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus* (Munich 1923), Vol. II, p. 702.

3 Gide writes of Lescure and his achievements: "We may say that, today, the science of foreseeing crises is more exact than that of foretelling the weather." Charles Gide, *Political Economy* (trans. from the third, 1913, edition of *Cours d'Economie,* New York 1919), p. 159.

4 Jean Lescure, *Des crises générales et périodiques de surproduction* (3rd ed., Paris 1923). In the latest edition of this work (1932) Lescure was obliged to declare that the cartels had not been able to prevent the crisis and had even contributed to its aggravation. But he consoled himself by saying that the cartels might have prevented it if they had followed other policies! See J. Duret, *Le Marxisme et les crises,* (2nd ed., Paris 1933), p. 142 and note.

5 The reader will find a choice collection of these "hymns" in Lewis Corey, *The Decline of American Capitalism* (New York 1934), as well as an analysis of many of the phenomena discussed in this article, as applied concretely to the trend of American economic development.

tensive"[6] (when at the moment they were not), in 1926 chose, of all places, his introduction to a new edition of the second volume of *Capital* in which to say:

"We socialists used to say ourselves that crises are unavoidable so long as things are produced capitalistically. On the other hand it was precisely the capitalists who hoped to be able to soften the crises more and more through unions of entrepreneurs. . . . Thus things stood till the World War, which has basically overturned the relationships in this field also.

"If crises arose till then out of purely economic relations which were to be influenced but little by capitalist politics, since then, however, we have entered into a period of crises which are incomparably the greatest part a product of the politics of the governments, *and which therefore may be avoided even if capitalist economy continues* [emphasis not in original] if the policies of the governments were somewhat less determined by military and monopolist considerations and somewhat more by economic insight into the needs of the circulation process."

In the light of what has happened since, any comment on this passage would be superfluous!

The most important serious contribution among Marxists to the consideration of the changing nature of the crisis, is to be found in the work of Rosa Luxemburg and her followers, *i.e.* those who have further developed and in part corrected her studies in the problem of the limits of capitalist accumulation. But her political polemics with Kautsky (in which in all essentials she was correct) and her revolutionary spirit made the Kautskians unwilling to take her work seriously. On the other hand, Lenin's criticism of certain mechanical and onesided concepts on her part of the nature of imperialism and the limits of capitalist accumulation, caused it to become a fashion among parrot-Leninists to take pot-shots at her without troubling to read her fundamental work, *The Accumulation of Capital.*

For the purpose of this limited theoretical survey, it is sufficient to emphasize that Rosa Luxemburg's primary contribution to the problem we are considering was to show in detail that, insofar as the existence of non-capitalist sectors and regions acts as a safety valve for the draining of "surplus" capital and "surplus" products, the increasing sway of capitalism in all industries and in agriculture and in all lands tended to make crises harder and harder to overcome and to convert the cataclysms of cyclical crises into a factor making for a general crisis or descending curve in the development of capitalism as a whole.

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6 Karl Kautsky, "Krisentheorie," *Neue Zeit* (vol. II, 1902), p. 136.

Crises Under Monopoly and Imperialism

This last brings us to a fundamental distinction that must be borne in mind in any consideration of our subject. Social systems are like organisms in that they are born with the "seeds of death" within them, and further, in that they have their period of growth, maturity and decay. This is the long-time or systemic cycle. On the background of this long-time cycle there are a number of periods of temporary "illness." People can go from birth to the edge of the grave without a day of illness, but capitalism by its very nature goes through a necessary and periodic series of convulsions, both while it is growing and when it is in decline. Although the same inherent contradictions that cause these frequent crises also involve, in the long run, the general crisis and decline and death of the system as a whole, they are not to be confused with the latter. To say that a man has a cold and a fever is not to say that he is dying. He may in fact be very young and have many years of *increased* vigor before him. In the same way, to say that at a given moment, say 1857 or 1873, there is a crisis which arises inevitably out of the nature of the system does not necessarily tell us whether, after it is over, production will reach new levels higher than ever before and political contradictions become softer than (let us say) they were in 1848 or not. Will the "disease" leave the "patient" with further capacity for growth, or will it initiate his decline? Is capitalism on the whole on the downgrade or is it still on the upgrade? Is any given cyclical crisis a crisis on the general background of growth? Or on the general background of decline? Does the general growth in vigor tend to counteract and modify the severity of the cycle? Or does the cycle receive reinforcement from and contribute to a general decline in or crisis of the system as a whole?

Spasmodic growth, spasmodic decline—"spasm" is the law of development of the capitalist system so inherently contradictory in its fundamentals. Can we discover any changes in the configurations of the crisis, in its "symptomology," which will throw light on this question? Have the recent developments of monopoly and imperialism tended to soften the internal contradictions or intensify them? Have they given capitalism a new lease on life, growth and vigor? Or are they a factor for hastening its decay? This is the central question, and we must examine anxiously the crises from the 1890's on (*i.e.* since trustification and imperialism became influential determinants of development) to see what light they throw on this question.

Two courses are open: an empirical consideration of the magnitude

and course of each crisis from which to deduce some theoretical conclusions; or a theoretical consideration of the nature of monopoly capitalism from which to draw certain conclusions as to its general aspects in this field, with check-up through the examination of the actual course of recent crises. The latter course is here chosen as an introductory to the former.

It is difficult to face the subject of crises clear-eyed unless one is a revolutionist. But "revolutionary impatience is not an argument." The tendency of the economists of the socialist right and of capitalist orthodoxy, as we have seen, was to herald each new development in capitalism as softening or tending to eliminate crises. Trustification was so hailed. But all too often they were answered by the opposite sort of mental blindness and formularistic approach, to the effect that the system must get worse, because Marx said it would. Each crisis had to be more severe than the last. And so on. To match the economists who proclaimed each crisis the last, and each recovery the beginning of a crisisless capitalism, the "left" produced well-intentioned "theoreticians" who proclaimed the given crisis to be the last in the sense of its being the beginning of recoveryless capitalism.

The crises of the 1890's and early 1900's were not as severe as the crisis of 1873. This is empirically verifiable and undeniable. Even Rosa Luxemburg, in her polemics with the revisionists, was forced to recognize this. She posed the problem in 1900 and again in 1907 in this fashion:

"But if the credit system, cartels, etc. do not suppress the anarchy of capitalism why have we not had a major commercial crisis for two decades, since 1873? Is this not a symptom demonstrating that, contrary to Marx's analysis, the capitalist mode of production has adapted itself, at least in a general way, to the needs of society?"

Rosa Luxemburg answered in the negative, but she had to depend on theoretical considerations (and her analysis was by no means exhaustive), for the empirical material of the moment seemed to be all against her. She could only point out theoretical reasons why this would not continue to be the case for an indefinite period. In 1907 she underscored the first favorable empirical fact, that the relatively mild crisis of that year had been most severe in the land of greatest trustification, America.

The development of young imperialism opened up whole continents to the export of idle capital which could no longer find profitable investment in the older countries. It drained off surplus capital funds, then surplus capital goods. Then to a lesser extent, surplus consumption goods. Thus crises in the older lands (the non-capitalist regions like inner Africa knew no capitalist crises until 1929 when the raw-material producing and incipient industrial regions of the world experienced their first real crisis)

found a safety valve to weaken their effects and to shorten them and postpone them by draining off capital and goods to non-capitalist regions. For several decades (1880-1910) the rapid industrialization of non-industrial regions provided a prolonged market for capital goods and, what is extremely important for the long-run effects of the same phenomenon, a tremendous stimulus to the expansion of the capital goods industries in the older lands.

Another powerful stimulus to the basic industries was the rapid arming of the great powers: shipbuilding, armor-plate, munitions, fortifications, chemicals, automobiles, strategic railways, and the machines for making the machines for making these things—heavy industry par excellence grew with giant strides.

Marx attributed fundamental importance to the falling rate of profit as an absolute tendency of capitalist production, whose driving force is the quest for profit. From this standpoint each crisis is a reflex of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, and serves the drastic sanative function of reducing the value of constant capital, squeezing out a great deal of "surplus" capital, above all enterprises of most unfavorable set-up, lessening the pressure on profits due to "excess" supply of goods and "excess" productive capacity, depreciating existing capitals, causing a fall in wages and interest rates. Thus a crisis was a painful and convulsive offset against and temporary overcomer of the falling rate of profit. Like certain fevers, it left the patient wasted and weak, but destroyed the germs and put him in a position to gain weight and convalesce rapidly. The crisis was followed by cyclical recovery and a new upswing of accumulation and prosperity.

At the same time the falling rate of profit is, within certain limits, a driving force for technical progress, and finally a driving force for overseas investment and trustification at home—all of which temporarily result in a higher rate of profit.

Once more we find in imperialism as a first effect the weakening of crises, for the super-profits derived from backward regions (thanks to their lower technique, lower technical and organic composition of capital, lower wage scales, higher domestic cost of production, competitive advantage for advanced industry, etc.) help to offset the falling rate of profit in the advanced lands and to raise the rate of profit at least within certain important spheres. To some extent, insofar as there is a free movement of capitals towards the most profitable investment, the super-profits derived from backward regions were distributed more widely than the actual capitals involved and tended to enter into the formation of the general or average rate of profit of the "homeland."

Trustification and the "Softening" of Crises

The existence of a steadily mounting surplus of idle, *i.e.* "surplus," capitals was concealed for a time by the ease with which they were absorbed into speculative channels through the great stock issues and greater expectations of early trustification. Though the the new trust often, even usually, paralyzed part of the productive apparatus that it crushed or absorbed, and though it set to work to prevent new productive capital from entering into its field, this did not hinder the financial organizers of trustification from "capitalizing" this static or reduced productive apparatus at unlimited nominal values ("the sky's the limit") and thus idle capitals, however diminutive, went into "Wall Street," and for a considerable time engaged themselves in the sport of driving up nominal "capital values" by pressing against each other through the purchase and repurchase of the same shares of the limited actual value of the existing productive plant, at ever higher "values," *i.e.* stock market prices. Again the effect was to soften or cushion the sudden fall of innumerable small "surplus" capitals out of the productive process.

Monopoly itself was an attempt on the part of more favored, *i.e.* more powerful aggregates of capital to safeguard themselves against the nagging pressure of the falling rate of profit, by making their capitals exempt, as far as possible, from the pressure of competition of capitals. They succeeded in reducing and largely eliminating competition within their own special sphere—absorbing or crushing competitors, getting government favors, excluding foreign competition through tariffs or even embargo, creating conditions which made it harder and harder for fresh aggregates of capital to enter into their chosen sphere, etc. They got such control of the price of their particular product that, in place of being a competitive price, it became within certain fairly wide limits, a monopoly price, regulated not by the pressure of rival capitals and hence not by the price of production, but by the degree of monopoly and by the point of optimum returns. But monopoly price carried with it a super-profit, above the average rate of profit: monopoly profit. To be sure this was at the expense of the less organized industries, at the expense of the paralyzed "surplus" capitals, at the expense of more backward industries (petty bourgeoisie), less organized regions (agriculture) and countries (those of backward technique). It withdrew part of the total social capital more or less successfully from the competitive movement of capitals and part of the total profit from the sphere of profit distribution by the free play of competition of capitals. Hence it raised the rate of profit of monopoly capital

only by lowering the mass and rate of profit for distribution among non-monopoly capitals.

Mass production, too, within certain limits, proved at first a "softener" of crises. Despite monopoly price, the new huge productive enterprises were able to cheapen production so much that the optimum monopoly price was often far lower than the old competitive price albeit not lower than a new competitive price would have been for the new conditions of production. Hence, again within limits, a lowering of prices caused an expansion of the consumers' market in the advanced and backward countries alike, partially relieving the pressure of "surplus" products and "surplus" productive capacity.

Add to this a limited more general distribution in advanced countries of part of the super-profits from backward lands; higher wages in war industries; concessions to prevent strikes in highly profitable industries to keep production going at full speed; distribution of crumbs to small stockholders when "melons" were cut; bribery crude or subtle, direct or indirect, of labor leaders, skilled layers, labor politicians, etc.; concessions out of super-profits made in the form of social services and social insurances to great sections of the working class in certain privileged countries (what reformist illusions and what working class imperialist aberrations were spawned by this phenomenon between 1870 and 1914!) Add to this the growth of the so-called "new middle class," including an enlarged bureaucracy, stock and insurance salesmen, etc. and parasitic personal service and luxury occupations to serve the new rich recipients of these enormous super-profits, and we see two more "softeners" of the crisis in advanced countries: an expansion of the consumers market through the purchasing power of all the distributed crumbs of super-profit and an absorption of some of the "surplus" population into these new occupations.

Finally the raising of the rate of exploitation by speed-up, rationalization, etc., made possible by the economic power and technological set-up of the great enterprises, raised the rate of profit through the production in large-scale industry of an increased relative surplus value.

All of these phenomena (and any thoughful Marxist can add other similar ones) had as their first effect a tendency to weaken or soften crises; and indeed while the transition was taking place between relatively free competitive capitalism and imperialist-monopolist capitalism, there was an actual weakening of the crisis cycle. This it was that put orthodox Marxism on the defensive for a time, and sowed the illusions in favored layers of the proletariat in advanced countries and in their unconsciously and consciously corrupted and theoretically paralyzed spokesmen, that we were entering into a period of softening crises and crisisless capitalism. Ignorant

and near-sighted reformist theoreticians in good faith, and conscious agents of the bourgeoisie in proletarian ranks in bad faith, developed the thesis that monopoly capitalism and overseas investment (imperialism was too harsh a word) were progressively improving capitalism, bringing social reform, democratizing the ownership of industry (widows and orphans owning stock), "civilizing" backward regions, eliminating or at least softening crises, eliminating or softening the contradictions of capitalism, making its organization more social, and leading gradually and painlessly to socialism without crises, without breakdowns, without sharp class struggles and without revolutions.

The orthodox Marxists of the Kautsky type (the early Kautsky, of course) proved powerless to stem this tide of illusion. It was useless to deny the facts, yet many tried inventing "left" statistics which denied the softening. Luxemburg answered: "Wait and see" and pointed to certain obvious cracks in the walls of the new paradise. Lenin set about to analyze the parasitic, decadent, anti-progressive and predatory character of imperialism and monopoly and the theoretical postulates for the inevitable sharpening of class war, colonial resistance and international conflict. "Orthodox" Marxists that refused to take account of the new phenomena inevitably degenerated and went over into the camp of the revisionists and reformists they were trying to combat. Parrot-orthodoxy is always a most dangerous destroyer of scientific integrity and while it appears to keep the flag flying, its own inability to comprehend the ground on which battle must be given leads sooner or later to panicky retreat and surrender to opportunism. Fear to recognize and analyze new phenomena means inability to meet the situations they create; theoretical stubborness, theoretical ossification, then (for the facts break through) theoretical timidity and panic, and at last, acceptance of the false position it did not know how to combat.

If the first effects of imperialism and monopoly were to weaken crises and soften the class antagonisms in the advanced countries, the long run effects were just the opposite.

The opening up and industrialization of backward regions at first provided a "safety valve" for the advanced countries, and then, within a few decades, exhausted the very existence of such non-capitalist regions or "safety valve" areas. On the contrary, some of those regions began to export goods, and in a more modest way even capital goods and surplus capital. But the relative exhaustion of the safety valve regions, which Friedrich Engels and after him Rosa Luxemburg had predicted (we may note this without taking too literally Luxemburg's formularistic analysis of this phenomenon) tended to convert each separate crisis of capitalism

into a contributor to a general crisis of the system as such, *i.e.* into a tendency towards an absolute decline of capitalism.

This in turn tended to lessen the possibility of super-profits, and after a brief rise led to a sharper drop in the rate of profit. This tendency has by no means reached its full realization, but the golden days of imperialist super-profits are already at an end. The world being all divided up and all of it (omitting the Soviet Union) within the orbit of capitalist production, there is more and more pressure and competition on the part of the great powers for the control of the diminishing non-industrialized regions and sources of super-profit.

The backward regions themselves, shaken suddenly from their long sleep as relatively static societies, have developed new classes, explosive discontent, and within a few decades not only did old centers of colonial revolt like Ireland and India, which for a time had been relatively quiescent, flare up afresh, but also new regions covering much of the earth began to resist. Thereby they became ever "poorer" places for imperialist investment or the yielding of super-profits and tended to raise the crisis of capitalism to a higher political level.

Problem of Excess Productive Capacity

The industrialization of non-industrial regions at first provided an enormous market for the heavy industry of the older countries. But when that market began to diminish, it had already so over-expanded the industries producing means of production that practically any one of the great powers could supply "effective demand" of the entire world. Now the fallacy of devoting more and more capital to the production of means of production without being capable of enormously expanding to many times its size the effective demand for the means of consumption (consumers goods) which these means of production were to produce, became obvious. The problem of excess productive capacity in the advanced countries reached a height undreamed-of in the earlier history of capitalism. The tendency to an absolute expansion of the forces of production without regard to the limits which capitalist social relations put upon the market, which Marx had signalized as at the heart of capitalist crises, now reached such heights that even a single crisis, *e.g.* that of 1920 and that of 1929, was unable, nor the two of them together, to squeeze out the "excess" productive capacity.

Once more we are face to face with a phenomenon which indicates that, by and large, capitalism has driven productive capacity permanently or absolutely beyond the limits set upon production by capitalist social rela-

tions, *i.e.* in "good" times as in "bad" capitalism is entering into a period where economic progress must cease and economic decline set in (still with ups and downs) or the social limitations of the system itself be disrupted by social revolution.

Preparation for the "bigger and better" wars of imperialism stimulates enormously, in its early stages, the productive capacity of heavy industry. Here there seems to be a maket without limits, till budgetary deficits, absolute limits of taxation and mass impoverishment through overtaxation, set in.

The World War provided, for a time, a market that swallowed everything regardless of quantity or quality that had anything to do with war. Therein lies the modicum of truth in the illusions concerning "war prosperity" and "war socialism." "If we only had another war," says the one illusion, "prosperity would come again." And the other is based upon the fact that war, like a socialist society, removes—while it lasts, if it doesn't last too long to the point of exhaustion—the limitations that capitalism puts upon the absorption or consuming power of the market. Yet the final result of wars to-day is to accelerate capitalist decline, to reduce the purchasing power of large areas through direct destruction, and to limit the purchasing power of the masses even in non-battlefield participants through astronomical budgetary deficits, currency inflation and staggering taxation. Moreover, in imperialism we are dealing with a system which by its very nature, gives expression to its contradictions not merely in the relatively milder form of the "commercial" crisis, but no less inevitably in the social-political-military crises which are world wars.

Cyclical Recovery and Prosperity Limited by Monopoly and State Capitalism

Monopoly price and monopoly profit, as we have already seen, withdraw a great part of the total surplus value from the sphere of competing capitals and prevent it from entering into the formation of the average rate of profit. Hence monopoly profit rises at the expense of the further fall in the general rate of competitive profit, and small competing capitals become more unprofitable and the accumulation of idle "surplus" capital incapable of finding profitable employment, grows apace. Disregarding, for the purposes of limiting the scope of this article, the effect upon backward industry, the petty bourgeoisie, weaker countries (through dumping) and agriculture, we must still note another sign of general decay. The idle capitals can find "employment" only in speculation and booms become more and more speculative and unhealthy while whole series of competitive in-

dustries and agriculture (for this and a variety of other reasons) can remain "sick" all through a period of "bonanza prosperity."

Mass production develops its own rhythm determined increasingly by technical considerations on the one hand and the need to distribute the enormous (in an absolute sense) fixed costs over as large a number of units of commodities as possible. It becomes less and less related to "demand," to the absorptive capacities of the market, and more and more dependent upon the requirements of this internal rhythm. Hence it has an inherent tendency to "overproduction," to "absolute" use of its productive capacities, and as the market becomes "overproduced" it seeks to meet this problem by expansion of credit,[7] instalment selling, increased advertising, sales pressure and increased selling costs, winning at the expense of some other sector of industry, dumping, government support, still further expansion to reduce production costs, etc. All this tends to magnify the extent of the crisis when it finally does come.

On the other hand, monopoly capital is more powerful in resisting the crisis "symptoms" which in their turn become the crisis "cure."

A crisis is "cured" by the elimination of "surplus" capital, by the shrinking of capital values, by the elimination of productive capacity, by a cessation of production in many branches or units, by a fall of prices to a point where they stimulate increased demand, etc. But monopolies are equipped to resist these very previously automatic "deflationary" remedies. To stop production altogether with such an enormous amount of fixed costs, they find impossible; and they try by the devices mentioned in the preceding paragraph to keep up production all through the crisis. At no time in any previous crisis did excess stocks of viable goods continue to exist and be produced for years after the onset of crises as was the case in 1929.

Monopolies, furthermore, with their greater control of the price of their commodities, acted as a brake on the fall of prices, of the value of existing stocks of goods. Today, in the seventh year of the present depression, there is excess productive capacity that has not been bankrupted and excess stocks in certain fields which two successive crises have failed to eliminate. Under such conditions we can no longer say that the crisis leaves the patient wasted but in condition to convalesce rapidly. Rather the crisis is now like a high fever, and the recovery like a continuance of low fever conditions and of an incomplete, fitful character.

Modern trustified industry intervenes ever more directly in the control of the state. The apparatus of government and big business are so in-

7 The changes in the nature of money and credit and their effect upon the business cycle are so important and extensive as to require a separate article. They cannot be treated here.

timately fused that the state becomes more and more a direct instrument of the will of a little handful of financial oligarchs. Thus the "anti-deflation" policies of trustified industry are carried over into government's crisis policy. In place of the crisis "running its course" the state intervenes to prevent price drops, to sustain bankrupt banks and industries out of taxed and borrowed public funds, to prevent the squeezing out of enterprises that are idle and the contraction of capital values, to manipulate price levels by currency devaluation and inflation, to maintain credit by lending to unsound enterprises (*e.g.* Reconstruction Finance Corporation), to maintain capital values by buying up whole sections of "surplus" productive capacity (as of "excess" spindles in England), to maintain price levels and diminishing markets by prohibitive tariffs, embargoes, premiums to aid dumping, currency manipulation to the same end, subsidies, quotas, etc., by "pump priming," government purchases at arbitrarily excessive prices (compare the fantastic silver venture of the United States, or prices paid for relief goods and on public works, or the artificial sustaining of the price of cotton, etc.). Needless to say, these devices do not touch the basic causes of crises and cannot prevent the depression from running its course. They delay price drops but cannot prevent them. They shift the burden of the crisis from unsound enterprise to the mass of taxpayers and consumers, to classes and sectors having less direct influence upon government. They further disorganize the world market. They act as a brake upon the painful and drastic but ultimately sanative effects (for capitalism) of the crisis. They cannot substitute planned economy for economic chaos. What they can do is add a superstructure of "plan" to a foundation of chaos. Organized chaos is but a retarding, prolonging and aggravating of the phenomena of crisis. The existence of monopoly in a competitive system and its manipulation of government policy help to explain why the crisis of 1921 was so swiftly succeeded by another, why the prosperity of 1923-29 was so unsound, and why the crisis of 1929 was the deepest, most universal and most prolonged in the history of capitalism.

To the extent that unparalleled government intervention in the present crisis has prevented certain crisis features from working themselves out (*e.g.* bankruptcies) it merely means a carrying of excess productive capacity into the subsequent recovery period, making the succeeding "prosperity" more unsound.

Universalizing Crises and Promoting Economic Disequilibrium

In the early days of capitalism a crisis involved only the industrialized regions and sectors of production. These shut down completely when a

crisis came, and mankind continued to supply its basic wants from the still non-industrialized sectors and areas. But today industrialization is so widespread and capitalism so generalized and human economy so dependent on capitalist production, that the non-industrialized sectors and regions can no longer supply the world's wants during times of crisis. Hence the shutdown of capitalist industry is no longer so complete. This too was at first a moderating influence—to some extent remains so. But it is offset under imperialism by the world-wide diffusion of the dominance of capitalist economy. Just as wars can no longer be localized but readily become world wars, so crises can no longer be localized to a limited industrial area, but, as soon as they reach a certain magnitude, they become truly world-wide.

The crisis of 1929 exempted no sector of industry (except war industries) and no region of the globe (except the Soviet Union) : it was truly world-wide. Indeed, it was most severe, on the one hand, in the country of the most advanced capitalism, the United States, and on the other in the continents and regions recently drawn into the orbit of capitalist production, the raw material and agricultural sections of the globe.

Basically a crisis is a rupture of equilibrium between the various factors of capitalist production and capitalist society, which equilibrium is not a product of planning but a blind regulation by the operation of the law of value with all its inherent contradictions. The "function" of the crisis is temporarily to restore the disrupted equilibrium once more. This periodic rupture and restoration of equilibrium is inherent in the very nature of capitalism. Monopolist and imperialist capitalism, however, promotes a more drastic rupture of equilibrium than does pre-monopolist, freely competitive capitalism. We can instance here only a few of the ways in which it does this:

1. It promotes a greater disequilibrium between basic and heavy industry, on the one hand, and the capacity of the consumer market on the other. Basic industry tends to develop its own inner technical production laws (mass production) and cut loose from the market altogether (until each crisis calls it sharply to order.)

2. A disequilibrium between heavily trustified industry (generally basic or producers goods) on the one hand, and the more poorly trustified consumers goods and retail trade industries on the other.

3. A disequilibrium between industry and agriculture.

4. A disequilibrium between industrial and raw material industries, areas and countries.

5. A disequilibrium between the productive capacity of any advanced country and the world market as a whole.

The disequilibrium caused by the unequal development of capitalism in various lands is enormously accelerated. A country like England stagnates and declines. The United States, France, Japan, develop at a dizzy pace. Japan jumps overnight from an "object" of colonial exploitation to a "subject"—an imperialist power. Germany forges ahead, is laid prostrate, enters the arena again. And through it all, the pressure on the world market grows, for any one of a half dozen countries feels equal to supplying the world market and running the whole show.

In prosperity as well as in crisis devices like protective tariffs, imperial preference, embargoes, subsidies, dumping, etc., grow apace. The progressive tendency to free competition and free trade changes into its opposite, on the world market as well as within each country; and once more we are face to face with a general decline phenomenon. The proud boast and great service of capitalism, the development of the world market and world division of labor, yields to a systematic demoralization of the world market and an attempt (for imperialist war purposes) to abolish the world division of labor and make each country a producer of all its basic needs within its own borders regardless of the absolute economic waste involved.

In the new type of international competition for hegemony over the contracting world market, armament becomes a decisive competitive device; and war, the most drastic form of world crisis and the greatest promoter of disequilibrium, becomes (to use the quaint language of the Briand-Kellog Pact) "an instrument of national policy"—the basic instrument of national economic policy on the world arena.

Conclusion

The matters analyzed in the present article lead again and again to the conclusion that with the advent of monopoly capitalism, which seeks to make profit by a curtailment of productive capacity and supply within a given field, by the elimination of competition within that field and by setting a monopoly price to secure monopoly profit, and with the related development of modern imperialism, a number of new phenomena develop (and many more could be added) which are expressions of a general crisis or decline of the capitalist system.

These are not merely expressions of the cyclical crises which have affected capitalism since its birth and will accompany it till its death. These *cyclical crises* have tended to promote the structural changes in the system as a whole to which we have been referring. (Crises, for instance, are great promoters of trustification.) But now these structural changes in capitalism are in turn causing important changes in the nature, structure, depth,

length, frequency, universality and permanent effects of the cyclical crisis, and while intensifying crises are deforming and weakening the recoveries.

Certain tendencies inherent in the capitalist system and its development (hence Marx was able to foresee and predict their results) have reached such a stage that they now represent important structural changes in the system itself. These are essentially decline phenomena. This is being belatedly and distortedly recognized by capitalism: in the attempt to develop a crisis theory at last, in the left-handed tributes to Marxism, in the "sincerest flattery" of imitation and grotesque caricature of the planned aspects of socialism, in state capitalism (a decline phenomenon which we have no room to analyze here, but which the reader can easily derive from fragmentary hints in this article), by talk of the "long-time" factors of crisis as opposed to the cyclical factors; by pronunciamentos on the "end" of capitalism (*cf* "New Deal" and "National Socialism"), by ideological, political and social reaction.

The present cyclical crisis is one occurring against the background of the beginnings of a general crisis of the system. This general trend of decline will express itself in cycles of recovery and depression as did the general trend of ascent. But during the ascending period booms were reinforced, depressions weakened, and each recovery found capitalism at higher levels than the preceding one. Today the general decline reinforces depression and makes recovery uneasy (in the sense of the international situation), more feverish and speculative, weaker and briefer. Depression phenomena become more chronic (the "permanent reserve army," for example, the permanent state capitalist and state aid features, permanently "sick" industries, "permanent" emergency regimes such as fascism, etc.) The "long-time factors of expansion," as Lewis Corey has shown in *The Decline of American Capitalism,* are increasingly approaching exhaustion. The contradictions inherent in capitalism are reaching new and humanly always more intolerable levels. The resources of government and ruling class are being turned from promoting production to limiting production, from promoting progress to curbing progress. Future "prosperity" will no longer reabsorb the industrial reserve army. Future recovery will continue to promote the "progress" of the decline phenomena we have been analyzing. The perspective is for deeper and more frequent crises (of both the "war" and the "commercial" type), weaker and more incomplete recoveries, continuance of the development of the general decline of capitalism even in the periods of recovery and prosperity, growing economic and political reaction and retrogression, till the proletariat develops the understanding, organization and power to take over and reorganize society on the basis of socialist planned economy and production for use.

Social Origins of Nominalism

BY EDWARD CONZE

In the older books on the history of philosophy Descartes marks the turning point from medieval to modern philosophy. Later on German historians began to date modern philosophy from Nicholas of Cusa. Both these estimates are now thirty years out of date. Ever since Duhem published his researches on Leonardo da Vinci and the origins of modern science, it has become each year more and more evident that the real turning point in European thought was the change from scholastic realism to Nominalism. The Nominalist philosophers of the 14th century were the pioneers of modern thought, the characteristic feature of which is the endeavor to control nature by mechanical means.[1]

In university circles the question has been hotly debated whether the economic structure of capitalism is responsible for the development of a capitalist mentality, or whether antecedent changes in the religious and philosophical convictions of men led to the growth of the economic structure of capitalism. It has been claimed that it was the re-interpretation of Christian religion at the time of the Reformation which led to the bourgeois mentality that created the capitalist economic system. Recent economic historians have, however, shown that the beginnings of capitalism lie in the 14th century. We are thus faced with the strange coincidence that a new (capitalist) economic system begins to arise simultaneously with a new (Nominalist) philosophical system. We have to ask ourselves whether this is more than a coincidence and whether, perhaps, the Nominalist philosophy expressed the needs of the economic structure that began to shape itself at that time. In the 17th and 18th century, Nominalism was at the basis of the philosophy of precisely those thinkers who most ardently and clearly fought for the realization of a bourgeois conception of society. Could Nominalism from the very start have been an expression

1 There is an almost complete agreement among recent historians of philosophy on that point. Ernest E. Moody, in *The Logic of William of Ockham,* has, however, challenged the current evaluation of Occam's philosophy. He represents Occam's logic as an attempt to return to pure Aristoteleanism. His arguments are far from convincing, as I hope to show soon in a review of his book for the *Marxist Quarterly.*

of bourgeois mentality? I think that we must come to this conclusion. Naturally I cannot hope to give an adequate proof for my contention in a short article. All I can do is to try to render it plausible, and to refer the reader to the more detailed account I have given elsewhere.[2]

Bourgeoisie and Nominalist Intellectuals

A bourgeoisie existed already in the 14th century, in France, England, Northern Italy and some parts of Germany. It is a curious fact that the bourgeoisie at that time was strong precisely in those parts of Europe where Nominalism flourished. To be sure, the agrarian population and its mode of production still predominated. But the economic system was strongly tending toward capitalism and the production of commodities. The instruments of a money economy were emerging: calculation was simplified, bills of exchange and bookkeeping developed, the stability of monetary value established, weight, measure and money regulated uniformly, and new laws passed which encouraged trade.

A certain concentration of capital took place. In England the Lombards concentrated the wool trade in their hands. Trade grew. In vain did the guilds try to conserve the collapsing artisan production. Restrictions on the number of workers allowed in each workshop were either sabotaged or openly abolished (as in Paris in 1307 and in 1351). Rich people, mostly traders, advanced money to artisans, many of whom thus became mere wage-workers. This development was specially marked in the textile industries. In this way a considerable number of workers were placed under one command, the productivity of their labor increased, greater specialization, division of labor and quicker application of technical improvements achieved. The first machines were set up in Boulogne, Augsburg and England. In 1340, in Bristol, a manufacturer was punished "for having caused various machines for weaving and making woollen clothes to be set up, and hired weavers and other workmen for this purpose." The liberation of the serfs created "free" workers everywhere. In Italy the serfs were set free very early, at the instigation of the bourgeois towns, and by about 1500 they are "free" almost everywhere. In Flanders feudal serfdom had been abolished in the 13th century, and in England it had almost disappeared at the end of the 14th century.[3] Since it proved more and more difficult for artisans to become masters, the number of skilled workers increased. Feudal retainers flooded the country, a pauperized mass of hirelings, beggars, criminals, prostitutes, creating a labor reserve which legis-

2 Edward Conze, *Der Satz vom Widerspruch* (1932), pp. 205-66.

3 Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (ed. Kautsky), v. I, p. 648.

lation and hunger soon placed at the disposal of capitalist production.

The growing bourgeoisie was conscious of its tasks and needs. It was a considerable political force. Under Edward III the towns sent 226 deputies to Parliament, compared with 76 from the countryside. In France the bourgeoisie of the towns became the main social force used by the King in his attempts to break the power of the feudal lords.[4] The bourgeoisie had started to act politically on its own. In 1306, in 1357, in 1382, in 1412, the *corps de métiers* of Paris, the artisans, tradesmen and workmen, revolted against the feudal powers. Etienne Marcel, their greatest leader, put forward demands for reform which retained their significance and power down to the time of the great French Revolution.[5] The Third Estate increasingly conquered administrative positions, and it played a dominant part in the States General which steadily gained influence during the 14th century, owing to their power to grant taxes. Between 1355 and 1358 the bourgeoisie had secured great influence in the French state. Thereafter the brutal and savage repression of the Jacquerie turned back the wheel of history. The allies which the bourgeoisie had found in the countryside were either massacred or terrorized into submission. It took the French bourgeoisie 400 years and the English bourgeoisie 300 years to conquer political power.

The leading Nominalists were not at all "pure theoreticians." On the contrary, they took an active part in the political struggles of the bourgeoisie. To mention only some few points: Occam fought passionately for Louis of Bavaria who based his power and policy mainly on the town bourgeoisie and whose political aims were those of the bourgeoisie—a secular democratic state. For parliamentary democracy is, according to Engels, the normal form of bourgeois rule. In 1359 Occam wrote an apology for Edward III, that pioneer of capitalist economy in England. Nicholas of Oresme and Buridan influenced the French Court to introduce those monetary reforms which the new money economy required so badly.

Dominated by Nominalists the University of Paris exerted its considerable political influence in the direction of the bourgeois revolution. From 1353 to 1358 it led a violent movement against feudalism. It took part in the bourgeois revolution of Etienne Marcel, and in the rebellion of the butchers which occurred in 1413. It elaborated a plan for the ad-

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4 Louis the Saint writes in his Testament: "Especially maintain the good cities and commons of thy realm in the same estate and with the same franchises as they enjoyed under thy predecessors. . . . For because of the power and wealth of the great cities, thine own subjects, and especially thy peers and thy barons, and foreigners also, will fear to undertake aught against you."

5 Thierry, *Essai sur l'histoire de la formation et des progrès du tiers état,* pp. 53, 58-63; J. M. Hyndman, *The Evolution of Revolution,* ch. 18.

ministrative and legal reform of France which foreshadowed the France of the 19th century. The population backed the University's new constitution by conquering the Bastille; the King even recognized it for a time; but in the end the mass butcheries of the Jacquerie delayed everything for centuries.

If we now take for granted the fact that both the conditions for capitalist development and a powerful and class-conscious bourgeoisie existed already in the 14th century, we may ask what the rising bourgeoisie would expect of its theoreticians. In accordance with its social position it would require (1) arguments against feudalism, and especially against the Church, and (2) a strengthening of that attitude of mind and of those methodological instruments necessary for technical control over nature.

Church and Religion

Feudal aristocracy and the clergy were the two classes that opposed the rise of the bourgeoisie. The nobility was fought with guns and money. The clergy owed their power largely to the hold which their authoritarian philosophy of life exerted over the minds of the people, and especially over the educated classes. This hold could be broken only by the creation of an alternative philosophy of life. Here was a task for the theoreticians of the rising bourgeoisie.

The bourgeois, although often anti-clerical, was not directly anti-religious. He was even pious. What he objected to in the Church was its wealth and its political influence. The bourgeois supported the Emperor and the kings in their attempts to restrict the political influence of the Church. They resented the accumulation of wealth by the Church. Not only was this wealth withheld from capitalist accumulation, much of it was spent in a way which shocked the bourgeois conscience. The budget of Pope John XXII (1316-34), for instance, must have appeared to a merchant or an artisan as the budget of a wicked waster. The Pope spent on war 63.7%, on salaries 12.7%, on alms, church building and missions 7.16%, on clothes 3.35%, on meals 2.5%, etc.[6] What the bourgeois wanted was a cheap church, *une église a bon marché*. They demanded a simple organization of the Church which would eliminate the unproductive monks, clergymen and the Roman Court, in short all those clerical features which were the most expensive.[7] Finally, the new class further objected, rather

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6 Hermelinck, "Das Mittelalter," in *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte* (1912), p. 174.

7 Engels, *Bauernkrieg*, pp. 37, 38-28. Later on Helvetius held the same ideas, *Oeuvres*, v. V, pp. 63, 93.—The Basque deputy in the Cortes said on October 2, 1936: "We want a poor Church."

inarticulately at first, to Church interference with the secular knowledge necessary to develop the forces of production.

The attitude of the Nominalists to Church and religion, social questions at that time as to-day, consistently reflected the attitude of the rising bourgeoisie. Occam and his followers, in their criticism of the Church, proposed concrete reforms the economic intent of which was obvious. They demanded a church pruned of over-elaborations, insisted on poverty of the clergy, and called for a return to the simple life of the *ecclesia primitiva* and to the poverty of Christ. They further demanded that the activities of the Church should be restricted to the purely religious and spiritual field. The fraction of the Franciscans to which Occam belonged dreamt of an ideal Church, spiritual, virtuous and poor, in contrast to the Roman Church of the time, carnal, vicious and wealthy.[8]

The Nominalists further taught that the doctrines of Christianity could not be proved by reasoning; and that they were in fact contradictory to the principles of reason. They asserted that the existence of God, rationally speaking, can be established, at best, as probable only. God's essence cannot be understood by our reasoning power. Nothing can be rationally understood except on the basis of some intuition. But of God no intuition is possible. In the absence of empirical data one cannot even be sure about immortality of the soul. It cannot be rationally demonstrated—as St. Thomas attempted to do by studying the essence of man—that man has any aim that lies beyond himself. Nominalism left man without an essence, and in consequence led to interminable doubts about the meaning of life. Many doctrines of the Church were declared by the Nominalists to be in express opposition to reason.[9] Even the basic principle of logic, the principle of contradiction, is, according to Occam and R. Holkot, violated in the sphere of faith.

The relation of these Nominalist doctrines to the class tasks of the rising bourgeoisie can, I think, be shown in three respects:

1. By insisting on the doctrine that faith cannot be proved rationally, Nominalism prepared for the secularization of knowledge, and for an elimination of theological considerations from our knowledge of the world. As G. Ritter[10] has pointed out, Occam's radical division between faith and rational knowledge contributed considerably to the success of purely secular science in winning its independence from theological sen-

8 Denzinger, *Enchiridion,* n. 494, 485.

9 Pierre d'Ailly states that faith contains "nonnulla quae apparent manifeste contra rationem et quorum opposita sunt consona rationi." Denzinger, *ibid.,* n. 229.

10 G. Ritter, "M. v. Inghen und die okkamistische Schule in Deutschland," *Stzb. d. Heidelb. Ak. d. Wiss. Phil-Hist.* (1921), p. 69.

timents and ideas. At the same time, it is characteristic that Nicholas of Oresme worked consciously to break the clergy's monopoly of education. He writes for "tout homme qui est de franc condition et de noble engin," disseminates knowledge also among laymen and makes Aristotle accessible to the lay *conseillers du roi* by his French translation of the *Politics*.

2. By asserting the unreasonableness of the doctrines of faith, the Nominalists revealed how strange the feudal religious traditions appeared to the common sense of the new bourgeois class. The same emotional reaction to feudal religion is shown in the famous Nominalist doctrine that all commands of God are arbitrary. They must simply be accepted, and we need not think that they are really justified.

3. Many writers assume that it was out of mainly religious motives that the Nominalists attempted to increase the gap between knowledge and faith. This may be the case as far as the motives of individual Nominalists are concerned. But these are sociologically unimportant compared with the social results of increasing the gap between knowledge and faith. Weak and not yet quite conscious of themselves, the Nominalists could not openly throw feudal religion overboard. They could only bow it politely out of the room. This explains, I think, those curious Nominalist doctrines which *indirectly* rendered religion superfluous in scientific research. Since the activity of the *causa prima* cannot be understood in detail, rational research will have to deal exclusively with empirical causes, with the *causae secundae*. As regards psychology and ethics, Occam and Pierre d'Ailly taught that one cannot prove rationally the necessity of the supernatural habitus (Faith, Love and Hope) since it is possible to derive all its effects from the natural habitus. The modern Roman Catholic writer H. Denifle [11] admits that this doctrine cannot escape the conclusion that the supernatural habitus can be dispensed with in a rational account of the activities of the human soul.

To be sure, many mystics out of religious motives have claimed that God is too high and too sublime to be grasped by our natural reasoning powers. But the mystics coupled this thesis with a contempt for the natural faculties of man. This is, however, emphatically not the case among Nominalists. They deprive the Christian doctrine of any support it was supposed to have in the natural gifts and aptitudes of man, but at the same time they attribute a high value to those natural gifts and aptitudes. The result of necessity is damaging to the cause of religion and it requires only a little time for the Church to experience it. The Nominalist teachings on the relation between knowledge and faith, worked out to their logical

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11 H. Denifle, *Luther und Luthertum in der ersten Entwicklung* (2nd ed. 1906), vol. I, p. 592.

end, contributed in no small measure to the decline of religious convictions, and consequently, of the power of the Church. But in the 14th century, the Church was socially still very powerful: it could be opposed only by those who at the same time kneeled pro forma before its majesty.

Knowledge and the World

Members of different social groups acquire knowledge for different reasons and motives. The studies of medieval scholastics aimed at saving the individual soul and at increasing the power of the clerical hierarchy. The Nominalists deliberately and consciously turn away from many of those questions which agitated the scholastic mind, but which appeared to them as *magis subtiles quam utiles*. Nicholas of Oresme shows a marked contempt for pure speculation, for a "philosophe speculatif qui n'estoit pas expert en vie politique, pratique et active." Everywhere he looks for practical applications. The increase of man's practical control over his environment more and more becomes the goal of knowledge. The cultivation of pure reason is deemed an impossible chimera. For Occam, in accordance with Franciscan tradition, the will is superior to the intellect. Pure reason does not exist. *"Omnis actus intellectus est actus voluntatis."*

For St. Thomas, for instance, the "essence," the object of pure theoretical speculation, had been the aim of thought. In its search for truth the intellect must leave aside the particular and contingent things.[12] Now, for the Nominalists, the particular, the concrete thing becomes the object of thought. The "essences" of scholasticism become accessible only when we discard our practical attitude towards things. The leisure classes of Greece had studied only those sciences which were connected with beauty and perfection. The Third Estate, earning its living by work, turned to those sciences which deal with the necessities of life, despised by Aristotle and the scholastics, who for all their intellectual power were the ideological representatives of economically parasitical classes. Mechanics, as is well known, appeared degrading to Plato. It corrupted geometry by making it go "like a runaway slave from the study of incorporeal, intelligible things to that of objects which come under the senses and by using, in addition to reasoning, bodies which have been fashioned, slowly and slavishly, by manual labor." St. Thomas shared those sentiments[13] the denial of which is the very starting point of Nominalism.

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12 St. Thomas, in 6. Eth 1, 2-3.

13 "Artes liberales sunt excellentiores quam artes mechanicae. Sed, sicut artes mechanicae sunt practicae; ita artes liberales sunt speculativae . . ." Those arts which are not "liberales," "ordinantur ad opera per corpus exercita, quae sunt quodammodo serviles." St. Thomas, I, II, q. 57, a. 3.

Knowledge, as conceived by the Nominalists, aims at the control of events, and not at a knowledge of essential being. Questions concerning the nature of being *qua* being, discussions about *forma* and *substantia,* become purely verbal and uninteresting. Ontology as a rational discipline begins to lose ground rapidly. Not the things themselves but their signs and symbols become the true objects of science. Jean de Jeandun, fellow combatant of Occam, states quite openly that astronomy has merely the task of giving an account of appearances (*salvare apparentias*). The astronomer is not interested in knowing whether those orbits, epicycles, etc. which are hypothetically postulated for the purposes of calculation have an existence in *esse et secundum rem.* He is interested in the calculation, not in the real cause of events.[14] This theory opened the way to the Copernican revolution which rendered calculation of the movements of the stars easier without claiming to come nearer than Ptolemy to "the reality" of things. For Jean de Jeandun it does not matter whether the hypotheses are true if only they are useful, if only they work. Other hypotheses, which no one has as yet thought of, may perhaps perform the same service; we therefore can never be certain of having rendered truly "reality" itself.

Reality of Universals and the World as Chaos

The central thesis of Nominalism, viz., universals are not real, is familiar to everyone. For the Nominalists things lose their *substantia essentialis* which, according to Aristotle and the scholastics, constituted the inner core of their being and the object of true scientific thought. In the Aristotelean tradition the essence of things was invested with quite a number of important functions. By denying reality to the essence of things the Nominalists developed the new conception of scientific method which rendered possible the machine age. They also evolved a picture of the universe which has remained basic for the bourgeois mind.

In this context it is interesting to note that the "principle of parsimony" is for Occam one of the main arguments against the reality of universals.[15] The assumption that nature is organized along the simplest and most economical lines, that *entia non sunt multiplicanda sine necessi-*

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14 Duhem, *Leonardo da Vinci,* v. IV, pp. 101-03. Schelling (11th lecture): "Es ist wahr, dass man durch Anwending der Mathematik die Abstaende der Planeten, die Zeit ihrer Umlaeufe und Wiedererscheinungen mit Genauigkeit vorherbestimmen gelernt hat, aber ueber das Wesen oder An-sich dieser Bewegungen is dadurch nicht der mindeste Aufschluss gegeben worden."

15 Occam: "Dico quod species neutro modo dicta est ponenda in intellectu, quia nunquam ponenda est pluralitas sine necessitate. Sed sicut alias ostendetur, quicquid potest salvari per talem speciem, potest salvari sine ea aeque faciliter. Ergo talis species non est ponenda."

tate, was not made for the first time in 1350. But the emphasis laid on this principle ever since, the fact that in subsequent periods it has been invoked to decide innumerable theoretical questions, and that in no previous age was it regarded so seriously as during the last six centuries, seems to suggest that in some way it made a particular appeal to the bourgeois mind by suggesting a close affinity between the workings of nature and those social and mental processes which characterized early bourgeois activity. It is indifferent to feudal mentality how much one spends or wastes, but the argument for economy finds a ready echo in bourgeois hearts. If the principle of parsimony were denied, not one of the results of modern thought would remain untouched.[16] The principle is patently an arbitrary one. Why should nature be governed by the needs or limitations of the human mind? Its unquestioned acceptance can be explained only by the natural bourgeois desire to project his own aims into his picture of the world. In the cosmos as in society, there is no need for fripperies, extravaganza, hierarchies of principles, laws or prelates.

The Nominalists teach that things by themselves have no relation to one another. Man has to establish relations between them. Before man operates upon them things are an unrelated and unorganized chaos. Universals are organizing principles which alone bring order into things. But Occam denies any objective existence to universals and to the relations between things. Only our mind establishes these relations.[17] The world of nature is not the locus of relations but our mind and the words of our language. The order of the Thomistic cosmos has become a heap of inconnexa.

That the world should appear to be a chaos to the bourgeoisie and its theoreticians is a natural consequence of its social position. The capitalist producer is confronted by a chaos of commodities. He finds himself involved in an unplanned economy in which production is affected by the perturbations of an unregulated market. Nowhere does he find any order which might govern his actions. Where there is some order in society, laws, codes, agreements and contracts it is *he* who has brought it about. The structure of the world always appears to man to be in many ways a reflection of the structure of the society in which he lives. Just as the Church found its hierarchy reflected in and supported by the structure of

16 The best way of exploding a doctrine is to drag its tacit assumptions into the light of day. It would be a useful task for a Marxist to trace the history of the law of parsimony throughout the history of bourgeois thought, and to show how many of the tenets of modern thought rest on that extraordinary assumption.

17 Occam: "In re nihil est imaginabile nisi absolutum vel absoluta." "Relatio tantum intentio vel conceptus in anima importans plura absoluta." "Nihil sciture nisi complexum; complexum autem e non est extra animam, nisi forte in voce vel in consimili signo."

nature, so the bourgeois mind enshrined the chaos of bourgeois society in the cosmos of which it was a part.

Since the rise of Nominalism, bourgeois thought has never ceased to feel that the world, ontologically, is a chaos before man brings order into it by his thoughts and by his actions.[18] Feudal scholasticism found order in the world as it is. Post-bourgeois Marxism regards the world not as a chaos but as a "net-work of natural phenomena."[19]

Conclusion

A more detailed investigation of Nominalism would have to go further, and show that the law of inertia which, although clearly formulated only about 1650, is the very foundation of all mechanical (*i.e.* bourgeois) thought, is the automatic consequence of the Nominalistic denial of the reality of universals. It would have to show how the bourgeoisie in its very attempt to extend the power of an anarchic society over nature, feels more and more like a stranger in the world about it and therefore continually discusses whether it can really understand or get at it. It must show why the bourgeois mind can never lose the feeling of being strange and lost in the world, why it will always be subject to the illusion that there is an unknowable reality behind appearances. One would further have to meet obvious objections by showing, for instance, that the mentality of the so-called "Nominalists" of the 11th century was radically and profoundly different from that of the Nominalists of the 14th century. A survey of the last six centuries would have to show that class-conscious bourgeois thinkers have always taken Nominalism for granted, and that all deviations from Nominalism in modern philosophy are due to non-bourgeois tendencies caused by the necessity of effecting a compromise with the Church and nobility. In that way, it might be possible to prove that the Nominalist philosophy and the bourgeoisie not only arose together, but that they remained indissolubly bound together during the entire course of their respective histories. This article is a small contribution to a study of the bourgeois mind and preparatory to a clarification of the relation between Nominalism and dialectical materialism, or what is the same thing, of the relation between the mechanical and dialectical method.

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18 In *Der Satz vom Widerspruch,* n. 241, I have given a long list of pertinent statements from bourgeois philosophers.

19 From Lenin's commentary on Hegel's *Logic,* quoted in Luppol, *Lenin und die Philosophie* (1927), p. 86.

Metaphysics of Reaction

BY BERN BRANDON

TIMES of social ferment are always a stimulus to serious social thinking. When the pillars of the traditional order are collapsing, all men are aroused from their previous political apathy to the realization that social change is once again the order of business and that the time has come when they must define anew their attitude to the alternatives with which society is confronted. The signs of the times are evident in America today. The trek of the middle class intellectual to the left constitutes a notable chapter in the American awakening. There has been, on the other hand, an ominous crystallization of middle class intellectuals toward the right. Such a trend, regrettable though it may be, is certainly not very surprising. It is a matter for real surprise, however, when a considerable number of these right-moving intellectuals give unmistakable indications that they know not on what sea they are adrift and toward what rocks they are headed; and it is a matter to reflect upon, when they express a preference for communism while the direction of their movement is toward the very abyss they fear—fascism.

This irreconcilable contradiction between subjective intentions and objective role indicates, on the face of it, at least two things. In the first place, it should convince us that the attempt to reduce every manifestation of reaction to the simple elements of some crude cliché can only render us insensitive to the complexity of the problem with which we must deal. In the second place, it suggests that our methodologic approach must be such as to convince the confused intellectual, especially if he functions in one of the social sciences, that any program of social action, having its roots in a body of natural and social theory at a thousand points at variance with the elementary requirements of scientific method and of certified knowledge, is not entitled to the support of enlightened men. This, unfortunately, is the plight of the middle class intellectual, who would change the world even before he understands it. This article, it need hardly be said, is not intended for those right-moving intellectuals who are not interested in understanding. Our differences with them are not in the realm of intelligent discourse.

It may, it is hoped, be of some service to men of thought who are willing to follow the light of reason wherever it may lead.

I

The man of thought, regardless of his field, is a product of traditions of thought which set the conditions for his creative activity and the limits to his fruitfulness. He cannot function as historian, economist or philosopher and ignore the accumulated heritage which the labors of his predecessors have left him; and his own individual contribution depends to a greater extent than he himself realizes upon the premises, usually implicit, which he inherits and rarely questions. The degree of success which he attains is therefore determined, whether he is conscous of it or no, by the very premises from which his investigation starts. This is a scientific commonplace of which so-called social science, unfortunately, seems hardly aware.

Blindness to the elements of scientific method accounts for a number of prejudices among social scientists which were rooted out of physical science long ago. Commencing an investigation from premises which are implicit—and therefore all the more dangerous because non-existent in the mind of the investigator—the social scientist persuades himself that his researches are purely empirical and inductive, his generalizations stemming from the antecedent facts. Little does he realize that the very object of his quest is to establish what the facts in a given situation really are, and that this is impossible without some hypothesis, or theory, as to what facts are relevant or irrelevant, material or immaterial to the purpose in hand. Thus the selection of evidence is always made in terms of some theory. This is not to deny, however, that the facts derived may provide the basis for some new theory or modification of an old theory. It is to deny that the exhortation of the old professor to his student, "Beware, my son, lest you find what you are in search of," is in conformity with the method by which truth is ascertained.

Now it should not be difficult to imagine what a deplorable effect this dogma has had in the conditioning of the traditional academic attitude toward Marxism. The investigator who in ignorance of his own assumptions denies that initial hypotheses have any place in a scientific investigation cannot be expected to display even an intelligent curiosity in a system such as Marxism whose assumptions are as explicit as its conclusions heterodox. Marxism, in the eyes of these men, is simply an elaborate rationalization, a social myth born of a necessity to furnish the *raison d'etre* for the will-to-believe. Their interest in the system ends precisely

where it ought to begin. The argument of these anti-Marxists runs somewhat as follows: It is a wise economy based on a good instinct simply to ignore the work of Marx, for Marx knew what he wanted to prove long before he wrote three volumes to do it. This, it should be clear, is an argument from ignorance. It boils down to the proposition that the theories of Marx aren't worthy of study because Marx had some purpose in their formulation. It might as well be argued that 2 plus 2 do not add up to 4 because the animating purpose behind the addition is to settle a debt after a card game. It has not yet occurred to these professors that the validity of a social theory does not depend upon the subjective psychology of the investigator but upon the degree to which it finds experimental confirmation within the objective world.

In addition, however, to perpetuating prejudices inimical to the interests of science, ignorance of the logic of scientific method opens the door to an untrammeled free-for-all in social thinking which at its best provides but a partial insight into the social process and at its worst constitutes a positive social menace. There is no method of reading history which is not at the same time a method for making history, and our only evidence that it has been read aright is a careful check-up that none of the relevant and determinate facts have been ignored, that our explanation is self-consistent and consistent with the known, and that it clearly indicates the possibilities for realizing the potentialities of a given situation through informed social activity. Social thought which is indifferent to these methodologic cautions is always defective and frequently lends itself to the uses of the unscrupulous. Nazi racial "science" is perhaps the classic example of the irresponsible service to which unsupported theories can be put when motivated by considerations of political expediency. A similar process is at work on a less grand scale in all the other capitalist countries. That, I take it, is the main social danger involved in uncritical theorizing.

Usually, these unestablished social theories are no more than an expression of existing prejudice. They have about them the quality of elemental certitude that characterizes the traditional shibboleths of one's own social environment. Like religious and moral convictions, monogamy and property rights, patriotism and national honor, they are axioms to be accepted, not results to be questioned. They do not indicate the vagaries of individual thought so much as the interests and psychology of the class with whom the individual is very often unconsciously identified. A catalogue of such socially serviceable but scientifically unsupported theories—including theories of racial superiority, working class inferiority, progress through evolution rather than revolution, invariance of human nature, to name but a few of the more popular—would constitute in itself a damning

indictment of a social order whose interests are better served by the perpetuation of falsehood than of truth. The pity of it is that many honest men of thought in the social sciences, unquestionably sincere in their quest of the truth, are still so ignorant of the logic of scientific method that they cannot safeguard themselves against the fatal consequences of initial prejudice; the tragedy of it is that there are class interests powerful enough to seize upon and spread far and wide any falsehood which might be serviceable in strengthening the ideological props of the existing social order.

The dangers which inhere in uncritical theorizing become apparent as soon as we are brought face to face with the objective implications of the thought process itself. For all social thinking, whether we are conscious of it or no, involves a contemporary orientation on the part of the investigator to the issues in hand. In this sense, thought is not only a guide but a necessary prelude to social action, and we can no more divorce ourselves from the necessity of the former than from the consequences of the latter. Because of this indissoluble bond between theory and practice, many investigators wake up to discover that their theories have been given a political turn never foreseen, much less intended, by the authors themselves. The relative ease with which social doctrines have been married to programs of action never intended and sometimes even strenuously opposed by their authors is a recurrent phenomenon in the history of social thought. Can there be any doubt as to Malthus' opposition to the birth-control application given his theory of population by the Neo-Malthusians? And were Adam Smith to arise from his grave, is it not probable he would be the first to condemn "rugged individualists" who have made a mockery of his doctrines? Yet there is nothing more certain than the measure of responsibility these theorists share with the social policies advocated in their names. This is not to deny that the policies advocated might have involved a corruption of their theories. It is simply to affirm the existence of a common element which the theories share with their subsequent practice.

II

These considerations are relevant to the understanding of present-day reactionary thought. It would be a serious blunder to delude oneself into believing that all of reaction can be embraced in a convenient cliché, for that would ignore the subtle influence of tradition and thought in the mental conditioning of the intellectual. "The tradition of all dead generations," Marx writes in the *Eighteenth Brumaire,* "weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." If this be true of society in general, how much truer must it be of the man of thought in particular. Marx implies that

man does not live by bread alone. If the middle class intellectual is pleased to convert this proposition into man does not live by bread, that is no reason why the radical should fall into the contrary error and affirm that he does. Unfortunately, however, that is precisely the error that is made when we fail to give proper recognition to the place of thought and tradition in the making of the reactionary intellectual. Familiarity with the writings of some of the country's outstanding reactionaries would give a deeper appreciation of the justice of this plaint.

Perhaps the most vocal organ of reaction published in America today is the *The American Review.* Many of its leading contributors, including its editor, are avowed fascists. There are, however, among its contributors many middle-class intellectuals, among them Herbert Agar,[1] the historian, and Allen Tate, the critic, who have denounced fascism in unequivocal language. Tate has stated he is so deeply opposed to it that, in his own words, "I should choose communism if it were the alternative." Agar has gone even further in stating, ". . . if I had to choose between servitude to finance capitalism and servitude to a communist state, I would gladly choose the latter." That his alternative to "finance capitalism" was not fascism—which he also condemned—Agar has made abundantly clear in a symposium on the middle class in a recent issue of the *New Masses.* There is good reason to believe that there are many other contributors who share similar views.

Now this abhorrence for fascism, coming from almost any source other than *The American Review,* would not be difficult to understand or to share. Coming, however, from contributors to a journal whose every page extols the virtues of the Anglo-Saxon middle class, calls for a civilized religion under the aegis of Anglo-Catholicism, preaches the destruction of finance capitalism and a return to small handicraft industry, demands an hereditary land policy to insure the dominion of peasant agriculture, attacks the tyranny of liberal parliamentarianism and looks to the restoration of liberty through an irresponsible neo-medieval despot, glorifies nationalism, race, culture, Mussolini and Hitler—then the aversion for fas-

1 In a letter to the *Marxist Quarterly* Herbert Agar writes: "I agree about the illogicality of people who pretend to hate fascism and who still are associated with *The American Review.* But the point is that I am not associated with the magazine. A year ago last May (eighteen months ago) *The American Review* printed the last piece of mine it will ever print. I broke with Seward Collins, and I broke with him precisely on the question of fascism. It finally became clear to me, eighteen months ago, that Mr. Collins was a fascist. Since that time it has become clear to everyone who reads his magazine, but it was not clear before that time. Not only did I break off all connection with Mr. Collins' work and thought and magazine, but I have urged my friends to do likewise. Some have taken my advice; others not. But that is neither here nor there. I am not responsible for the magazines in which my friends write. I would not, now that its policies have become unmistakably clear, write a piece for *The American Review* if it were the last publication left in America—as it might become if America goes fascist!"

cism expressed by such outstanding contributors as Agar and Tate demands an assertion of faith in humankind which one might be pardoned for withholding. No less a partisan than Seward Collins, editor of the journal, realizes this full well. In a recent letter to the *New Republic,* he remarks: "But as I have pointed out to them [Tate and other Southern Agrarians], and as Miss Lumpkin's letter illustrates, there is too much similarity between their avowed ideas and those prevalent in fascist movements to escape being called fascists, were I not alive." There is no question but that there exists an apparent contradiction between their anti-fascist sentiments and their pro-fascist ideas. But is it not possible to explain away these disparate views without questioning the sincerity or genuineness of their professions? I believe such an explanation is possible if proper recognition is given to intellectual background.

Now it is important to note that the logic of these men's views is such as to make their thought compatible with the outlook of fascism and incompatible with that of communism. This is not to say that their views, natural and social, univocally determine fascism. It is to say, however, that the logic of their position is to include some social views, of which fascism is undoubtedly one, and to exclude others, of which communism is another. No doubt it is the recognition of the compatibility, rather than any preference for communism, which permits such an avowed fascist as Collins to break bread with them. The failure to distinguish the compatibility from an identity explains, no doubt, the haste of some radicals, including Grace Lumpkin, to bundle them with the fascists. If the inconsistency of Agar and Tate is due to a failure to understand the implications of their position, it undoubtedly constitutes a serious reflection on their philosophic acumen but not necessarily on their personal integrity. There is no element of their thought which can be described as uniquely fascist. In this respect it differs sharply from the views of other contributors to the journal. It possesses the traditional traits of religio-idealistic thought which have been serviceable to ruling classes from the Middle Ages to the present. Although possessing features characteristic of all fascist thought, it is no more peculiar to fascism than are nationalism, imperialism and war. What are its features as exemplified, for example, in Herbert Agar?

Agar's thought stems from the tradition of objective idealism. His thought has it roots in familiar spiritualistic and other-worldly propositions in regard to nature and man which attempt to explain everything and succeed in explaining nothing. Some of these assertions of fact—God the *causa causans* of nature and history, the existence of immaterial entities as the soul—can neither be proved nor disproved; other assertions of fact—free will, immutability of human nature, which, however, Agar rejects—

are demonstrably false or utterly worthless as explanatory or heuristic principles. Unlike species of subjective idealism, which are compatible with agnosticism, Agar's thought is characterized by a devout fundamentalism. His use of cosmic will as an explanatory principle, identification of social determinism with mechanical fatalism, and a belief in free will are utterly at variance with not only the established facts of science but also the procedures by which truth is ascertained. Thus, the views he holds set limits both to thought and the very method of thought. His whole system of beliefs involves a renunciation of the empirical world of fact, the only source, according to science and Marxism, of our knowledge. To the extent that his beliefs assert propositions of fact incapable of verification or demonstrably false, they appeal for their sanction to something outside experience. His thought, then, would be incompatible with Marxism but compatible with religion, and religion, especially of a fundamentalist order, is perfectly compatible with fascism.

Agar's metaphysical idealism, like all forms of religious idealism, offers at one and the same time an explanation of how the world is and how it ought to be. Human institutions thus become directly identical with moral principles. The state, law, property are not mechanisms reflecting the legal and the illegal, the social and the anti-social in terms of existent economic arrangements, but instruments of a Cosmic Purpose for the repression of the evil in man. Their function is to justify to man the ways of God by setting up limits to the exercise of avarice and greed, struggle and self-seeking. They have failed us, to be sure, but the failure is really our own. Institutions essentially good have been prostituted to purposes fundamentally bad. We have robbed these institutions of moral purpose by failing "to create a moral image of the kind of country we want America to become." The capitalist system came to pass "not as the result of a plan" because "no man was ever cursed with such an abominable dream. It came to pass because our avarice got the better of us, defeating the purpose for which this nation was made." Thus, the ills of social life are not to be sought in social relations which are independent of any individual, but in frailties of human nature which persist in thwarting the purposes of God. Now the practical corollaries for social life of this type of thought should be clear. It leads, in strict logic, to a policy of *social* defeatism, since the ills we suffer are to be sought inside, not outside, man (although Agar believes this doctrine saved him from nihilism). All social action of a curative character is predestined to defeat since, upon this analysis, the illness and its cure lie *inside* man: Thus, social action of a remedial nature is rendered unintelligible. If, however, we throw logical consistency to the winds and embark on a program of social reform, our efforts are doomed

in advance because of the unregeneracy of human nature. Thus, we are caught on the horns of a logical dilemma from which there is no social escape. Furthermore, since the world is a simple arrangement of good men and bad men, class action designed to abolish, not a moral conflict, but a class-economic conflict rooted in the relations of capitalism is rendered not only unintelligible but immoral. Much as one would like to reciprocate Agar's tribute to communism—"There is a moral argument for communism; there is a moral argument for private property; there is none for capitalism as we see it today"— the effect of his compliment is only to pile confusion on deeper confusion. For if there were consistency to his beliefs he could find as a believer in Christian ethic no moral argument for communism. This, incidentally, is recognized by all religious men who have taken their religion half seriously. Organized religion, unfortunately, has not found a similar cause for complaint against fascism. For the social morality of religion is compatible with the good capitalist-bad capitalist, good worker-bad worker conceptions of fascism, but incompatible with the enlightened class morality of Marxism.

If Herbert Agar—and this applies to Tate and other Southern Agrarians—has any understanding of the logic of his position, it is impossible to make out upon what rational basis he can express a preference for communism rather than capitalism, let alone fascism. In spite of his hatred of both, his thought, considered from whatever angle, is compatible only with the conceptions of liberal capitalism and fascism. This must inevitably be so, since it springs from intellectual traditions hostile to Marxism in spirit, method and content. It would be a mistake, to be sure, to fail to distinguish the compatibility from an identity, and place him with the fascists. To do so would only render us insensitive to those significant differences which define our opportunity and lay down our challenge, and would only leave Agar to the mercy of the very fascists he would slay. The challenge is in the same measure as our opportunity, and we can ill afford to neglect either. For Agar is just one of thousands of middle class intellectuals who are ready to break with present-day capitalism, but are trying to chart their course towards a promised land with a worthless, nay dangerous, intellectual heritage that can only bring them to disaster. These intellectuals—ignorant of the *causes* and in revolt only against the *effects* of our present plight—may, like Agar, find their inspiration in the past, and in the name of Jeffersonian democracy embark on some fantastic attempt to unscramble history and restore the golden age of the little man. It could only turn out as in Germany; it would be a tragedy that we must spare no effort to prevent.

We must recognize that the man of thought is a product of intellectual

traditions which set the conditions and impose the limits to his creative activity. Considering himself a free agent, he is none the less caught up and carried along in the toils of a social logic the objective implications of which he himself often does not have any understanding. Ignorant of the fatal defects in the premises he accepts on authority or popular prejudice, he becomes the unconscious instrumentality for the dissemination of ideas inimical to the best interests of science and society. Though honest in the quest for truth, he lays himself open to class interests powerful enough to seize upon and spread far and wide any falsehood which might be serviceable in strengthening the props of the existing social order, a possibility especially to be feared in times of social stress like the present. Creating an ideal for society in the image of his heart's desire, he fails to indicate the practical possibilities of deliverance from the existent situation. Untrained in scientific thinking, he has not learned to make his fundamental assumptions explicit. The Marxist who is alive to the elements of this problem will be sure to take them as the starting point in his solution for, as Marx observed, "No equation can be solved unless the elements of its solution are involved in its terms."

American Class Relations[1]

BY LEWIS COREY

THE APPROACH of fundamental social change makes the problem of classes crucial. An understanding of class interests, consciousness and action is necessary if social change is to become social engineering, animated by awareness of purposes and means. Society is not, moreover, a unity, and no fundamental social change affects all interests alike; progressive interests are fulfilled only as reactionary interests are limited or destroyed. And a multiplicity of minor interests become decisive as they merge into major class interests.

Progressive classes, as they acquire increasing awareness of purposes, means and power, sharply emphasize class interests and the class struggle, identifying their own class aspirations, rightly, with social progress in general. That is precisely what the revolutionary bourgeoisie did.

Conservative and reactionary classes, on the contrary, identify their interests with an ideal "classless" social unity which does not exist and is used to disguise and justify reaction. The triumphant bourgeoisie claimed to represent a democracy in which there were no classes. It is historical necessity that makes fascism, monstrous expression of the most brutal reactionary interests, deny the existence of classes and the class struggle. "How mistaken Marx was," shouts the bandit Mussolini, "when he claimed that society can be divided into classes, clearly divided and eternally irreconcilable!" Mussolini has "ended" the class struggle by crushing the popular masses and all progressive forces and by diverting Italian aspirations into a madman's dream of empire—"reconciling" classes in reaction, decay and death. It is, significantly, socialism and communism, whose recognition of classes and the class struggle is basic in their theory and practice, that represent the progressive forces of our age moving toward a new classless civilization.

One of the signs of multiplying social tensions in the United States is

1 This article is introductory to a series of articles analyzing more fully the historical-theoretical and statistical-occupational aspects of American class relations.

the increasing theoretical denial of classes. This is a reversal of the tendency of the more original American historians, during the past thirty years, to apply the class concept to study of our institutional development: an application that, however limited, produced fruitful results. The theory of "no classes" is a retreat to irrationalism and reaction. It is disquieting that many liberals and radicals emphasize the theory; for where the approach to problems of social change is not concrete and realistic, it must promote confusion and reaction.

1. Survey of Changes in American Class Relations

The "no class" theory emphasizes a classless American democracy. "Classlessness . . . an attitude hostile to the idea of classes, unwillingness to admit their existence . . . has been a dominant note throughout American history."[2] That is true, but it is also true that American society has been divided into classes that interpreted the classless ideal in conformity with their own interests. American history is unintelligible unless it evaluates the existence, changes and struggles of classes. Colonial society was marked by an effort to transplant English class relations, including feudal landed estates. The American Revolution was not simply a "national" struggle for independence, considering the hostility of the majority of merchant capitalists, the inner class struggle over democratic rights, the class interests identified with the Federalist reaction. Jacksonian democracy was animated by the struggle for greater rights and power of the farmers, workers and lower middle class. While the Civil War assumed sectional forms, it involved a clash of class interests among Southern slaveowners, Northern capitalists and Western farmers. Nor was Populism a classless affair: it was a struggle of farmers and workers against the magnates of industry and finance. Trade unionism is an expression of class struggle, however limited its purposes and forms. Classless America? Its history is scarred with the struggle of classes.

True, American classes have been extraordinarily mobile and fluid. But that is no proof of classlessness, for the mobility and fluidity are impossible unless classes already exist. In the earlier stages of capitalism, varying

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2 Alfred M. Bingham, *Insurgent America* (New York 1935), p. 92. Bingham writes (p. 94): "There are plenty of indications that the aversion to recognizing class differences has been growing in America, rather than diminishing. . . . All these evidences of the American's dislike of class distinctions emphasizes the middle class nature of the American mind." It does nothing of the sort, for a dislike of classes is not wholly middle class. Nor does dislike of class differences wipe them out. Recognition of their existence is necessary if they are to be destroyed—as in the case of any other evil—and that makes a class approach necessary. Americans dislike classes, but they exist and are becoming more rigid: therefore let us mobilize that dislike in the struggle for socialism, which makes the classless society a reality and not merely an ideal.

according to historical conditions, classes are distinguished by their mobility and fluidity from the status and rank of feudalism; as classes are stratified, and capitalism reacts against its progressive forces, fascism reverts to the feudal ideal of status, rank and hierarchy: the meaning of the totalitarian state. . . .

The classless ideal flowered in the America of the 1820's-30's, when class mobility and fluidity were greatest. There were no remnants of feudal relations. The nation was dominated by agriculture, in which the majority (excluding, of course, Negro slaves) were independent propertied farmers, 70% of the gainfully occupied, tenants and laborers being a negligible quantity. The frontier made acquisition of landed property comparatively easy. Industry and trade were in the hands of an urban middle class, 15%

TABLE I

OCCUPATIONAL CHANGES IN THE UNITED STATES, 1870-1930

(*In Thousands*)

	1870	1900	1910	1920	1930
Enterprisers[1]	1,350	3,100	3,570	3,680	3,300
Farmers[2]	4,550	7,700	8,100	7,750	7,250
Wage-Workers	5,930	14,560	18,500	20,750	26,400
Industrial[3]	*2,950*	*10,200*	*13,200*	*15,250*	*16,650*
Farm Laborers	*1,800*	*1,900*	*2,550*	*2,450*	*2,650*
Servants	*975*	*1,450*	*1,575*	*1,270*	*2,000*
All Others	*205*	*1,010*	*1,175*	*1,780*	*5,100*
Salaried Employes[4]	670	3,240	5,430	8,320	11,650
Clerical	*250*	*1,100*	*2,100*	*3,540*	*4,225*
Salespeople	*85*	*490*	*770*	*1,125*	*2,100*
Technicians	*10*	*80*	*170*	*260*	*430*
Professional	*200*	*770*	*1,150*	*1,360*	*2,000*
All Others	*125*	*800*	*1,240*	*2,035*	*2,895*
Totals	12,500	28,600	35,600	40,500	48,600

1 Enterprisers includes all independent enterprisers (other than agricultural), self-employed professional persons (*e.g.* physicians and dentists) and other persons working on their own account.

2 Farmers includes laborers working on home farms, whose numbers were as follows: 1870—1,500,000; 1900—1,950,000; 1910—1,850,000; 1920—1,370,000; 1930—1,250,000.

3 Industrial workers includes all wage-workers in manufacturing, mining, transportation, construction and communications (including gas and electric light and power); all others includes taxicab drivers and all wage-workers in the service trades.

4 Clerical includes all clerks in offices and stores, stenographers, typists, bookkeepers and minor office help; salespeople includes salesmen and saleswomen in stores (but not traveling salesmen, who are included, with agents and canvassers, under all others); technicians includes architects, draftsmen, engineers, chemists and metallurgists; professionals includes all professional persons working for salaries, among them teachers, whose numbers were as follows: 1870—125,000; 1900—445,000; 1910—615,000; 1920—790,000; 1930—1,100,000.

Source: Compiled and arranged from material in the United States Census of Occupations for the respective years; A. H. Hansen, "Industrial Class Alignments in the United States," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, December 1920 and December 1922; R. G. Hurlin and M. B. Givens, "Shifting Occupational Patterns," *Recent Social Trends* (New York 1933), vol. 1; W. I. King, *The National Income and Its Purchasing Power* (New York 1930).

of the gainfully occupied, composed of small enterprisers, artisans and craftsmen. Only 15% were industrial or other wage-workers, the industrial revolution having made any real progress only in textiles. Farmers and urban enterprisers constituted 85% of the gainfully occupied. It *was* a middle class America. A rough economic equalitarianism was created by the widespread ownership of independent productive property. No one expected to remain a propertiless worker.

By 1870 all that was changed (Table I). The onsweep of the industrial revolution, and its new technical-economic forms of production, increasingly proletarianized the American people. Now a minority, the farmers included nearly 25% of tenants, while 30% of all persons engaged in agriculture were propertiless laborers. Nearly one-half of the gainfully occupied were propertiless wage-workers. The growth of collective large-scale industry, with its complexity and its separation of ownership from management, was producing a constantly larger class of salaried employees, almost completely propertiless, who performed the managerial and administrative tasks formerly performed by the capitalist owner-manager. The older middle class America was going, and by the 1930's it was practically gone. The end-product of American "classlessness" was conversion of the majority of the people into propertiless dependents on the property of a small minority and the stratification of classes.

2. American Class Relations Today

Since the ideal of the "classless" America of the 1820's-30's was ownership of independent productive property, it is significant that independent enterprisers today, including farmers, are only 21% of the gainfully occupied, compared with 85% a century ago. The change appears most strikingly in the case of business and professional enterprisers, whose numbers by 1930, despite the increase of industrial activity, were smaller than in 1910.[3]

That point is important. Up to 1910 the numbers of independent enterprisers mounted steadily, if slowly; thereafter they were practically stationary (Table II). Commenting on his own figures an economist says:

3 In the National Industrial Conference Board's publication, *National Income and Its Elements* (New York 1936), p. 40, Robert B. Martin estimates the number of independent enterprisers for 1930 at 3,825,000. Simon Kuznets, *National Income, 1929-32* (New York 1934), p. 11, estimates them at 3,268,000. Alba M. Edwards, of the Bureau of the Census, "A Social Economic Grouping of the Gainful Workers of the United States," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* (December 1933), pp. 379-80, estimates "proprietors, managers and officials" at 3,643,000, proprietors alone, it appears, numbering about 2,750,000; adding to proprietors the 500,000 self-employed professionals gives a total of 3,250,000 independent business and professional enterprisers.

TABLE II

CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF ENTERPRISERS, U. S., 1910-30

(In Thousands)

	Agriculture†	*Manufacturing*	*Mining*	*Mercantile*	*Construction*	*All Others*	*Total*
1910	6,307	259	33	1,253	175	1,857	3,577
1911	6,322	254	31	1,271	176	1,852	3,584
1912	6,336	249	30	1,289	177	1,846	3,591
1913	6,346	244	29	1,309	178	1,844	3,604
1914	6,353	239	28	1,331	178	1,847	3,623
1915	6,359	233	27	1,348	176	1,851	3,635
1916	6,365	228	26	1,365	176	1,852	3,644
1917	6,369	222	25	1,364	174	1,840	3,625
1918	6,374	217	24	1,254	169	1,759	3,423
1919	6,378	211	23	1,374	162	1,781	3,551
1920	6,381	206	22	1,403	160	1,888	3,679
1921	6,387	200	21	1,408	160	1,893	3,682
1922	6,271	191	20	1,432	164	1,970	3,777
1923	6,297	178	19	1,456	176	1,902	3,731
1924	6,344	167	18	1,471	180	1,839	3,675
1925	6,317	159	17	1,484	185	1,835	3,680
1926	6,200	153	16	1,493	192	1,829	3,683
1927	6,124	148	15	1,499	190	1,852	3,677
1930	6,000	*	*	*	*	*	3,200

† Enterprisers in agriculture include all farmers, whether owners or tenants; unlike Tables I and III, however, laborers working on home farms are not enumerated.

* Figures are not available.

Source: for 1910-27—W. I. King, *The National Income and Its Purchasing Power* (New York 1930); for 1930—Brookings Institution, *America's Capacity to Consume* (Washington 1934).

"While the absolute numbers of gainfully occupied, and also the absolute numbers working as employes, have grown steadily larger, the number of entrepreneurs has remained practically constant throughout the two decades [1910-27]. . . . It obviously follows that the percentage of the population classed as entrepreneurs has diminished. . . . It [is] perfectly plain that the independent entrepreneur is playing a relatively much less important role in industry than was the case a score of years ago."[4]

There was a considerable decline in the number of independent enterprisers during the depression of the 1930's,[5] but some of the losses have been recovered during the past three years.

The economic power of independent enterprisers is as relatively insignificant as their numbers. Not more than 400,000 are engaged in manufacturing, mining, construction and transportation, where they are over-

4 W. I. King, *The National Income and Its Purchasing Power* (New York 1930), pp. 52, 64.

5 Kuznets, *op. cit.*, p. 11, indicates a decline of 345,000 from 1929 to 1932 in business and professional enterprisers.

whelmed by the might of concentrated corporate capital. They flourish most actively in trade, where the chain stores make constantly greater gains. The farmers are enmeshed in a permanent agricultural crisis, while 42.4% of them in 1930, or 2,500,000, were propertiless tenants;[6] they are split into antagonistic class divisions, no longer a unified middle class group. Today not more than 7,000,000 persons (including owner-farmers, stockholders and enterprisers), out of 52,000,000 gainfully occupied, are owners of property that yields them a livelihood.

Wage-workers are now a clear majority of the gainfully occupied. Yet there are people who speak of the "disappearance" of the proletariat. They say: "America still has a proletariat, but every automatic process, every battery of photoelectric cells, diminishes its numbers and its political importance." . . . "During the last generation the tendency to weaken the proletariat has been gaining in every advanced country. Numerically there has been an increasing shift from manual to white collar occupations," emphasized by a decrease of the industrial proletariat in 1919-29.[7]

The industrial proletariat did not decrease during the 1920's; it was at least one-tenth larger in 1930 than in 1920. Although the rate of increase was smaller than in former years, the industrial proletariat by 1930 constituted 65% of all wage-workers compared with 50% in 1870. The decrease in the rate of growth was a result of more intensive mechanization, it is true, but it also was a result of the downward movement in the rate of growth of American capitalist industry; hence it marks the beginning, not of the disappearance of the proletariat, but of the decline of American capitalism. To assume disappearance of the proletariat is nonsense: it presupposes a development of technical-economic forces that would strangle capitalism in an unprofitable abundance.

Undoubtedly salaried employes have increased much more rapidly than wage-workers since 1870—a result of the shift from economic individualism to economic collectivism (multiplying managerial and supervisory employes) and the expansion of service industries. But the rate of growth among salaried employes, too, has been decreasing. It reached its peak in 1910; from that year to 1920 the increase in salaried employes fell to 53% and to 40% from 1920 to 1930. Wage-workers, on the contrary, increased more in the later period than in the earlier.

But the increase of salaried employes does not necessarily weaken the working class, although it profoundly alters its composition and creates problems of the utmost importance. For while salaried employes were

6 United States, Department of Agriculture, *Yearbook of Agriculture, 1932* (Washington 1932), p. 492.
7 Stuart Chase, *The Economy of Abundance* (New York 1930), p. 257; Bingham, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

TABLE III

CLASS DIVISIONS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1870-1930

	1870		*1930*	
	Number	*Per-cent*	*Number*	*Per-cent*
Working Class	6,040,000	48.3	34,975,000	72.0
Wage-Workers	*5,930,000*	*47.4*	*26,400,000*	*54.3*
Clerical-Sales[1]	*110,000*	*0.9*	*6,000,000*	*12.4*
Other Salaried[2]	*	*	*2,575,000*	*5.3*
Farmers[3]	4,550,000	36.4	7,250,000	14.9
Middle Class	1,810,000	14.5	6,025,000	12.4
Enterprisers	*1,250,000*	*10.0*	*3,100,000*	*6.4*
Salaried[4]	*560,000*	*4.5*	*2,925,000*	*6.0*
Big Bourgeoisie[5]	100,000	0.8	350,000	0.7
Totals	12,500,000	100.0	48,600,000	100.0

1 For 1870 the assumption is made that one-third of clerks and salespeople were sufficiently proletarian in their economic condition to warrant inclusion in the working class. For 1930 all of them, except the minority of higher paid and supervisory, are included in the working class.

2 Includes 1,000,000 teachers in 1930 but excludes the upper supervisory staffs.

3 Includes farm laborers working on home farms.

4 Includes higher paid salaried employes, mainly the managerial, supervisory and executive, and for 1930 only a part of the technical staffs.

5 For 1870, 100,000 enterprisers are transferred to the big bourgeoisie; for 1930, 200,000 are so transferred.

Source: Compiled and arranged from material in the sources cited in Table I.

definitely members of the middle class a century ago and most of them still were in 1870, today the majority of lower salaried employes must be assigned to the working class because of the proletarianization of their economic condition. Security of employment, privileges and differentials in salaries compared with wages have all been undermined. This is particularly true of salespeople and clerical labor. "Only when combined with administrative responsibility is clerical labor well paid. . . . The shadowy line between many of these clerical tasks and unskilled factory occupations is becoming more and more imperceptible." The prospects of promotion are negligible, while mechanization and scientific management have led "to the virtual elimination of individual initiative."[8] Four out of five professionals are dependent salaried employes and their earnings are comparatively small. Millions of organized skilled workers earn more than the majority of salaried employes: they are no longer separated from one another by a social-economic gulf. The masses of lower salaried employees, who like the workers must sell their labor power, belong to a new proletariat.

The working class, including lower salaried employes, is now an overwhelming majority of the gainfully occupied (Table III). Upper salaried

8 Amy Hewes, "Clerical Occupations," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. III (New York 1930), pp. 552-53.

employes, primarily executive, managerial and supervisory, are now the most important part of the middle class, while the big bourgeoisie is a class of predatory financial capitalists performing no useful social-economic function. Middle class America has been transformed economically into a proletarian America prepared for a socialist transformation.[9]

3. Some General Considerations

Alongside of the effort to prove "classlessness" is the effort to prove that the majority of the American people is middle class—denial of classes becomes an arbitrary regrouping of classes! The following observations are characteristic of that intellectual tendency:

"Already the middle class in America, not including the farmers, outnumbers the working class. Adding farmers to the middle class, the majority in sheer numbers is large." . . . "If half the white collar workers be transferred from the proletariat to the middle class and also a fourth of other skilled workers, the middle class would surpass the proletariat. This is a modest estimate of the proportions of these two groups that might be expected to respond to appeals directed to middle class consciousness rather than to appeals directed to the self-consciousness of the proletariat." . . . "If the middle classes are taken to include the farmers, professional workers, 'petty bourgeoisie' in the strict sense, and white collar workers, the middle classes are at least equal to the working class."[10]

But what do they mean by "middle class"? Historically the middle class is a class of independent small enterprisers, owners of productive property from which a livelihood is derived. That includes propertied farmers, but surely not the 2,500,000 tenant farmers who, while they aspire to ownership, are now propertiless. Nor can the middle class include the masses of propertiless, dependent salaried employes, although it may include the upper layers of managerial and supervisory employes whose interests, however, are identified with large corporate capital more than with independent small enterprisers. One may designate salaried employes as a new middle class, but it is a class most of whose members are a new proletariat: a wholly logical economic classification.

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9 Class relations are roughly similar in England. According to Colin Clark, "Further Data on the National Income," *Economic Journal* (September 1934), pp. 385-88, the gainfully occupied are thus divided: Enterprisers, 1,272,000; managerial, 1,180,000; clerical, commercial and professional, 3,698,000; wage-workers (including agricultural), 12,649,000; unemployed, 1,525,000. Industrial workers numbered 7,951,000—exclusive, however, of workers in telephones and telegraphs and in electric light and power.

10 Chase, *op. cit.*, p. 23; A. N. Holcombe, *The New Party Politics* (New York 1933), p. 101; Bingham, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

It is sheer invention to argue that Marxism recognizes only two classes. Marxism identifies the existence of a number of classes, permanent, transitional and mixed. It is, however, social atomism of the worst sort to speak of a multitude of groups whirling on their independent ways. Many types of groups exist and are important in many respects, but for decisive social action they merge into classes. A class is characterized by its relation to production, its identity of general economic interests, and its relation to the social order, old and new. From that angle the wage-workers and masses of lower salaried employes are united in the working class:

1. They are propertiless dependents in industry and must sell their labor power to live: a proletarian condition.

2. They have the same general economic interests in terms of immediate and final resistance to capitalist exploitation.

3. They are equally the product of economic collectivism (while the middle class of small enterprisers represents an outworn economic individualism), and that collectivism is the objective economic basis of the new social order of socialism.

Within that unity are all the progressive elements of a decisive social change—all the elements of a great mass movement against capitalism, for socialism.

Against that, what is offered? An arbitrary "psychological" regrouping of classes that abandons the concrete, realistic approach to social change. "Psychology is of the essence of classes. . . . We are what we think we are."[11] That is philosophical idealism, which makes objective reality a figment of the human mind—an idealism in which lurk obscurantism and reaction. That people are not conscious of belonging to a class does not make classlessness a fact, any more than a belief in the "Americanism" of J. Pierpont Morgan makes manual workers and salaried employes members of the plutocracy.

The kernel of truth in "psychology is of the essence of classes" involves the problem of class consciousness. That is crucial, as Marxism recognizes, for classes must become conscious of interests, purposes and means to act decisively in the social arena. But classes cannot become conscious unless they objectively exist. The "psychology" argument is used, however, to

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11 Bingham, *op. cit.*, p. 17. Bingham argues (p. 27) that universal smoking of the "classless" cigarette and the "equality of clothes" making it "no strange sight to see young workers in a mill town wearing striped flannel trousers, associated a few years ago with Newport," are "revealing symptoms of the process of social leveling and elimination of class distinctions," and concludes: "Truly the class struggle may become for many merely an intellectual concept in the face of such significant little facts as these." Truly a desperate argument! Newspapers report Spanish girls, clad in beach pajamas formerly a luxury of the upper classes, fighting against the mercenary hordes of military-clerical-fascist reaction.

suggest an acceptance of existing "middle class consciousness" because it cannot be changed: which means abandoning the struggle for a decisive social change incompatible with that consciousness. Nor is it an unchangeable consciousness: it *is* changing. Fascism changes it in a reactionary sense, for fascist repudiation of democracy and insistence on caste violate all the old libertarian ideals of the middle class. It is changed in a progressive sense when salaried employes form unions, go on strike,[12] impose "job control" (which is potential of the final social control of socialism); it may be changed by emphasizing that socialism liberates and amplifies the functional services now performed by salaried groups. The problem is to broaden these changes into a socialist transformation of consciousness.

Decisive social change involves elements of social engineering: the concrete, sober understanding of forces and interests, of their strength and weakness, of whether they are identified with potential progress or reaction. That is impossible without an understanding of class relations.

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12 This is happening with increasing frequency. The New York *Times* of November 25, 1936 has two suggestive reports: 1) A strike of managers, officials and clerks in nearly all the 100 Schulte stores; 2) licensed ships' officers strike in Atlantic and Gulf ports and join the ordinary seamen's picket lines carrying placards and distributing literature.

Reviews of Books

Dialectical Materialism

INTRODUCTION TO DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM, THE MARXIST WORLD-VIEW, *by August Thalheimer.* Sixteen lectures delivered at the Sun Yat-Sen University, Moscow; translated from the German by George Simpson and George Weltner. New York, Covici-Friede, 1936; 253 pages; $2.00.

DIALECTICS is like a sharp tool, a chisel. If used bunglingly it fashions only the crudest products, or perhaps nothing at all; and it is dangerous to manipulate because in the hands of a novice it often mutilates or destroys the object upon which it works. If used dexterously, however, dialectics is one of the most ingenious of devices: its operations upon the raw materials of science, art, history, religion, philosophy produce clarity and sharpness of meaning seldom if ever equalled by other tools in man's intellectual equipment.

Dr. Thalheimer's work illustrates the use of dialectics both at its worst and best. Which of the two predominates it is a little difficult to say, though it is unfortunate that the worst is found at all in a book which, according to its translators, is "to date the best introduction to the Marxist world-view," and which has already been translated from the German not only into English but into Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Spanish. The critically minded are bound to ask, "If this is the best to be found, what may the less pretentious be?" Of course the book is not intended for "academic philosophers." It is written for workers, Thalheimer says in his preface, for participants in the class struggle. This does not, however, excuse misrepresentation or faulty logic.

To indicate only one fundamental error in the author's use of dialectics, let us recall the principle of the relativity of events. In history, for example, no epoch is to be condemned as such. It is to be estimated from a broad perspective, and not merely in terms of itself but in terms of the occurrences out of which it arose and the further occurrences of which it is the precursor. Thalheimer recognizes this principle well enough abstractly, and even at times concretely. Yet in his judgment of such philosophies as

scholasticism and pragmatism he has virtually nothing to say about them except that they are sterile or futile.

As a matter of fact scholasticism is as significant an articulation of a great era as other philosophies are articulations of theirs. The role of Augustine's and Thomas' philosophy in the Middle Ages is comparable in importance to the idealism of Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece—an idealism the author, incidentally, is more ready to credit. It may well be that scholasticism is concerned largely with justifying the domination of the Church and a feudal economy, even though in the Nominalist-Realist controversy are to be found rich anticipations of the Renaissance philosophy of science. Considering its basic purposes, however, scholasticism did its work well, and its value should be measured not so much by comparison with the philosophic achievements of a greatly different time but as an integral, indispensable link in the chain of intellectual history. If so viewed dialectically, scholastic philosophy is no more fruitless than the Middle Ages in relation to modern civilization are themselves fruitless. Indeed scholasticism becomes foundational to the whole of modern philosophy, and thus to dialectical materialism itself.

It is the chapter on pragmatism, however, which reveals most glaringly this weakness of judging a period by too narrow a criterion. Because pragmatism is the product of bourgeois society, must we therefore assume even before examining it fairly that it is a "sham battle" and "insipid clerical nonsense"? Lenin's references to pragmatism in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* are followed devotedly—references which constitute probably the weakest part of that work and which show only the most cursory acquaintance with William James. Thalheimer seems in addition to have looked at some of Schiller's writings, but he dismisses Dewey with the phrase that though he is "a bit more artful than these other pragmatists . . . there is no fundamental difference between him and the others."

Now when the dialectical materialist utters such absurdities as that "pragmatism recognizes no reality external to the human mind," when he identifies this school with reactionary and idealistic doctrines which its primary object has always been to refute, he is disloyal to the demands of his own philosophy. He fails to examine with even superficial care what more patient examination may unearth as roots of his own doctrine. He fails to recognize that just as collectivism rises upon the technological foundations of the capitalist system, so dialectical materialism develops out of the achievements of bourgeois philosophy. Hegelianism, as of course Thalheimer admits, is one of these achievements. But pragmatism is another, indeed one of the greatest, and as a matter of fact Marx and Engels are among those who most keenly anticipate the importance of its

contribution. Any one who has made a study of the original material knows that there is a profound similarity between it and the Marxist methodology of social change, particularly in their mutual respect for practice as the test of ideas.

It is true that James and Schiller, especially, have related religion to their thought. But what Thalheimer does not perceive is that to a large extent pragmatism treats the varieties of religious experience as he himself does in his first two chapters—as a phenomenon of human life which we must recognize as powerfully real whether we like it or not. James' more optimistic regard for the values of religion is of course a legitimate difference from dialectical materialism, but this no more invalidates his whole contribution than it invalidates Hegel's.

And if Thalheimer investigated Dewey he would find that in this philosopher the points of relationship with Marxism are greater than in either James or Schiller. Dewey's major differences from James, I believe, center on, first, his disapproval of the latter's propensity to save religious experience by the pragmatic test; and, second, on his profound maturation of Hegelian dialectics as the universal methodology of science—as, in other words, the philosophic basis of those very technics which the new society would inherit intact from the mother society of capitalism.

Incidentally, that Thalheimer should fail to recognize the resemblance in the methodology of Marx and Dewey is not surprising, for his book is only too faithfully a "world-view." That Marxism is itself a method as well as a world-view or philosophic system, and that the two—while ultimately related—are by no means the same thing is a discovery that the author never once makes. His casual references to the methodological aspects of Marxism are at best inserted intermittently as if they were in no way distinguishable from its systematic aspects. As a result his discussion especially of epistemology, wherein several different criteria of knowledge are all run together, skids from one aspect to the other so dizzily that one finishes it with considerably less clarity than one begins.

To return to pragmatism, however. I do not mean that it is not bourgeois, if one wishes to call it such, nor that the differences between Marx and Dewey are trivial. On the systematic side they are great indeed; and the latter's hesitation at adopting the class struggle hypothesis, even as hypothesis and not as law, is perhaps an illustration of what Thalheimer well calls the "opportunist fallacy." Yet in notable respects Dewey's career has been a struggle to free himself and democracy from the ties of a system the evils of which he has denounced in unequivocal terms. The proper dialectical approach to his thought is not therefore one of supercilious and ignorant denunciation, but one of interpretation in terms of a

period of great accomplishments though growing tension. The contributions of this period are indispensable to any sound philosophy of the future; and Dewey's own contributions are among the richest.

Other illustrations of the failure to evaluate dialectically the relative achievements of philosophies other than the Marxist are fairly plentiful. Most of the time, for example, idealism is described as if it were subjective idealism; and when, as in the chapter on Hegel, the discussion suddenly switches to objective idealism, which is of course the true Hegelian position, the reader is totally unprepared to know how the two are supposed to be related. Thalheimer's discussion of Feuerbach is equally unsteady. We may then summarize this general criticism by two successive statements. In the first Thalheimer reveals a dialectical attitude: "The history of philosophy which, as you have seen, embraces more than two thousand years, is not simply a mass of errors in the light of dialectical materialism." In the second he quite contradicts himself: "As long as philosophy sought a special kind of world explanation opposed to the natural-science, materialistic explanation of the world, its attempt was fruitless and it only piled error upon error," its only substantial contribution being logic. Of course it is possible these contradictions are reconcilable dialectically. But reconciliation through "permeation of opposites" holds only when opposites are each evaluated in full. Thalheimer's discussion with a few exceptions is not one of great care to estimate most pre-Marxist philosophy for what it is genuinely worth, but of breathless haste to get through the enemy's waters to the safe harbor of ultimate "truth."

It is rather ironical that these criticisms are necessary, for Thalheimer's two chapters on dialectics as theory are excellent as far as they go, indeed probably the best in the book. And despite his failure with such philosophic examples as we have mentioned, other examples are brilliant in their simplicity and clarity. Also highly commendable is his effort to include Indian and Chinese philosophy in his historical survey—an effort which writers of introductory texts in America might very well emulate. And in another respect his book surpasses most introductions to philosophy: his continual references to economic and social bases of the various theories. Although his explanations of such bases are often too simplified and sometimes extraordinarily vague, on this point he need not be too harshly criticized; for his economic interpretations nevertheless are refreshing and at times challenging. By their use he lends new significance to several philosophers —in his discussion of Greek materialism, for instance, and in his provocative analogy of Lao-tse and Tolstoy.

What Thalheimer has attempted is an exceedingly difficult task. Perhaps one then should not be stern about what is in some way true of all

simplifications of complicated subjects. Yet simplification is not a synonym for distortion, and if the first frequently leads to the second that tendency should at least be minimized by as expert treatment as possible. One of the greatest weaknesses among Marxist theorists is their failure to obey adequately what might be called a dialectical law of scholarship—to achieve new syntheses of knowledge, such as dialectical materialism itself, by building upon the thoroughly grounded, maturely developed theses and antitheses of the intellectual substructure.

THEODORE B. BRAMELD

DISCUSSION

One of the great difficulties in writing an elementary text on any subject is that the author must assume as proved many fundamental principles of the science he is expounding. This difficulty is even greater with an elementary text on Marxism because the audience addressed, as in Thalheimer's book—an audience of workers and active participants in the class struggle—has not been open to the benefits of regular and ordered education and thus has little familiarity with technical philosophy and sociology, especially in the case of the young Chinese workers addressed by Thalheimer, whose education related almost wholly to Oriental thought. Thalheimer does not picture himself, one feels sure after reading his lucid prose, as having finished the Marxist picture of the world but only of having outlined it in black and white. Those who criticize an elementary text as Brameld does lay themselves open to the demand that they tackle the job of writing an elementary text on Marxism. Theodore Brameld has already written a good, sound book called *A Philosophic Approach to Communism*. I should be happy if he did as good a job on an elementary text.

Moreover, it is not true that Thalheimer does not see scholasticism as an historical product and denies its progressive worth over against ancient thought. It is the purely speculative, imaginative sides of scholasticism, the metaphysical web-spinning out of the philosopher's own gossamer, which dialectical materialism relegates to the realm of nonsense. Where in Marxism or in Thalheimer's book is there found a denunciation of the Nominalist-Realist controversy? Where in Marxism is William Occam treated as a backward mind? But while recognizing the progressive aspects of scholasticism as a *medieval* world-view, every Marxist must be careful to emphasize the reactionary character of contemporary Thomism and the insinuating way in which it penetrates contemporary social thought.

What Brameld thinks is Thalheimer's "running together" of "several different criteria of knowledge" displays an unfamiliarity with the dialectics of science. Truth itself is a unit, but its implications are varied. A scientific law is always held up to three different criteria of truth, criteria which are different exactly because they express aspects of the same thing: first, its appropriateness to the scientific system of which it forms a part—this is the doctrine of coherence; second, its correspondence to that segment of external reality whose behavior it subsumes in its summary statement—this is the doctrine of correspondence; third, its efficacy in leading the scientist to foresee future events—this is the doctrine of prediction. The first validates the law through the past; the second through the present; the third seeks to control the future. Brameld's "dizziness" in the face of what every good dialectical materialist knows, betokens an inability to breathe comfortably in the rarefied air of hard facts and proven theories.

Every American reviewer of *Introduction to Dialectical Materialism* has been especially concerned to dispute Thalheimer's judgments on pragmatism contained in his last chapter. It is true that the discussion there is inadequate. But Thalheimer's major contentions against pragmatism are nevertheless valid. The identification of pragmatism with Berkeleyan idealism is justified criticism of pragmatism's epistemology. The pragmatic test of workability as applied by John Dewey (and *a fortiori* as naively applied by William James) is ultimately nothing more than the doctrine of enlightened self-interest misapplied to scientific procedure. Methods work because they fit data; by distorting the essential character of the data any method can be made to work. Little attention has been paid by pragmatists to Professor Woodbridge's remark some years ago which contains the dialectical kernel of truth as regards the doctrine of workability. Professor Woodbridge noted that pragmatists had not dealt with the question as to whether a proposition was true because it worked or whether it worked because it was true. Pragmatism has never met the dialectical problem of the relation between form and content in propositional analysis of truth. To say that Dewey has fructified Hegelian dialectics is indeed an odd statement. He certainly has not done it consciously and avowedly. Where he has done it he has been right but the procedure is never crucial to his essential argument.

It is difficult to see how the one reference to Dewey in Thalheimer's book, which is quoted in the review, can lead a critic to imply that Thalheimer treats Dewey with "supercilious and ignorant denunciation." The correct criticism would be to say that Thalheimer does not devote enough space to proving his major contentions against pragmatism and that Dewey is not presented in detail.

The contention that Dewey, as against James, does not seek to save religious experience by the pragmatic test simply does not take into account Dewey's latest work or else is unaware of its existence. A reading of Dewey's philosophy of religion as contained in the book known as *A Common Faith,* which consists of the lectures he delivered at Yale in 1931, will surely enlighten all those who think that the kernel of James' thought in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is hostile to Dewey's philosophy of religion. It was with keen humor that Corliss Lamont, in reviewing Dewey's *A Common Faith,* titled the review "The Right Reverend Re-Definer." That pragmatism leads into spiritualism this work amply proves through the lips of its own leading propounder.

To say that "anyone who has made a study of the original material knows that there is a profound similarity between it [pragmatism] and the Marxist methodology of social change" lays the critic open to the charge that he has not read all of the original materials. There are three important books by Dewey on social questions which have appeared within the last decade or so. The last to appear was on liberalism. The other two are *The Public and Its Problems* and *Human Nature and Conduct.* The best of the three is the one written first, *Human Nature and Conduct,* and the best that can be said of it is that it stands for a sociologistic etiology, not for a sociological etiology. And as for its understanding of the class struggle as basic to social development in class society, it is as absent as the zeal of some of Dewey's defenders is great. *The Public and Its Problems* was published in 1929, and is a retreat into the belief in the resuscitation of the small community as a way of reviving communal life to thwart the dispersive character of the loss of neighborliness entailed by urban living and metropolitanization. Of all the blind, nostalgic panaceas to which liberalism has given birth this is surely the blindest. The book on liberalism crowns Dewey's social philosophy. I would like to know how its methodology of social change fits in with Marxism. GEORGE SIMPSON

Militarism and Democracy

DEMOCRACY AND MILITARY POWER, *by Silas Bent McKinley;* with an Introduction by Charles A. Beard. New York, Vanguard Press, 1934; 313 pages; $3.00.

IN THIS remarkable book Silas Bent McKinley has run over the course of human history in an attempt to establish a relationship between military forms and social forms and to find the influence which military developments have had upon society. Not a Marxist work, it nevertheless

commends itself to all Marxists by virtue of its objective and essentially historical-materialist approach to the subject.

It is clear that there is a definite relationship between social and military developments. Military developments, in the social sphere, parallel class developments; in the technical sphere they parallel changes in the means of production. These military changes, in turn, have their effect upon social conditions. Moreover, military power appears in history as the primary form of class rule, and, up to the complex capitalist state, as the essential character of the state. Thus, in a general historical survey, treatment of the military question is essential, and it must be admitted that many Marxist works have suffered from a lack of such treatment.

But McKinley has reversed the process. To him the military question is not derivative and secondary, but causal and primary. He sees in changes in military forms and methods of warfare one of the driving forces of history, an understanding of them essential to an appreciation of history. Specifically, McKinley propounds the theory that infantry is military democracy; in turn, it brings about political democracy. During periods when infantry has been superior to cavalry and the technical branches of the military service democracy has been able to maintain itself and to broaden the base of popular government. Once this superiority has been lost, reaction has set in.

It requires little reflection to show that this statement, in its sweeping nature, cannot be accepted. For, by and large, the backbone of all military power in the past has been the infantry. Only here and there have there been serious departures from this rule. So obvious is this fact that it has become a military axiom. Even today, when the technical arms of military organization have become so highly developed, the role of the infantry is still a debatable subject among experts. From time to time an exceptionally effective weapon has made its appearance which for a time gave its possessors marked military superiority. In turn, the chariot, the war elephant, the bow, the spear, the musket, played their role. They did not replace the infantry. Rather they became either supplementary to or the standard arms of the infantry. Infantry as the standard military institution retained its hegemony.

Furthermore, in developing his thesis, McKinley from time to time makes arbitrary demarcations. The heavily armed Greek infantry, or hoplites, receive his approval, but the light-armed Greek infantry, or peltasts, are frowned upon. No adequate attempt is made to show the superior "infantriness" of the former over the latter. In one place the Persian bowmen are referred to as an "aristocratic" branch of the military service. This is purely arbitrary. What made the Persian bowman an aristocrat and

the English archer a democrat? By comparison with the heavily armed Greek hoplites, a select group trained from childhood in the use of arms, and loaded with expensive armor, the Persian archer was a symbol of the common man, of democracy (if such a criterion can be at all used).

But if we reverse the point of view, and examine the entire picture from the inside, with the military organization on the periphery of the social organization, so to speak, this apparent mystery is cleared up. Democracy did not exist because infantry constituted the primary form of military organization and was victorious in battle. Rather the infantry was victorious because it represented a rising democracy. The Greeks defeated the Persians because they represented a superior social organization. The Greek military organization was an extension of a democratic society, the Persian of un undemocratic society. This phenomenon is noticeable in the relations between two countries, but also in the development of a single country. Essentially the same infantry which at the peak of the existence of the Roman Republic was so victorious, and which presumably brought "democracy" in its train, was unable to preserve this "democracy" or continue victorious against the "barbarian" armies (also infantry).

Both democracy and military victory were by-products of a rising class and of a developing social order. Rome was "defeated" by the barbarian tribes not because its military organization had lost its infantry base, but because a declining social order and degenerate ruling class had destroyed both its inner "democracy" and its fighting capacity. So also the rise of Athens as a military world power coincided with rise of commerce. Athens became the center of the commercial world, at that time confined to the Mediterranean. The new and growing commercial class demanded and obtained greater political power. The old aristocracy gave way to the new democracy. The new financial power made possible a mighty fleet and powerful army such as no other state could equal. The final transformation of the Greek armies from democratic citizen armies into mercenary professional ones merely kept pace with the transformation of Greece into a world power, with colonies and trading posts in distant corners of the earth. No longer could the citizen soldier, with his seven days' provisions and his farm waiting for his labor, be depended upon to perform the necessary military work of protecting the empire. His place was taken by the professional soldier, not even a Greek, who had no other interest but his pay and his share of the plunder. Democracy passed out of the picture when an empire replaced the individual city-states, and the democratic citizen army passed out with it.

It is interesting to note that the importance of the infantry receded in the early days of feudalism, when centralized states disappeared to be

replaced by a host of small, independent lords, each with his own small army. But a small army could be victorious only because of superior armament and training. Therefore the armored knight, and the armored retainer, came on the scene, who fought clad in mail from horses also clad in mail. These men were trained from early youth and knew no other occupation but fighting. The importance of the armored knight became less and less as the feudal system became more integrated, small lords giving way to big lords, who could raise and arm thousands of troops, thus again recreating the infantry. It was not only gunpowder which destroyed the superiority of the armored knight. English bowmen, Scottish pikemen, Genoese and Catalonian cross-bowmen did it before the advent of gunpowder. Still, the right and the ability to raise armies rested with the feudal lord. Military service was part of the service the serf had to render his master. So long as this condition remained the bourgeois in the towns were at the mercy of the landowners, until the advent of gunpowder. The thesis that gunpowder prepared the road for democracy because it made the common man the equal of the knight on horseback is only partially true, however. It is true on condition that the common man could have access to the newly invented gun. In truth, however, this new weapon was even further beyond the reach of the serf or artisan than sword and spear and horse had been previously. But the bourgeois could command the new weapon with his money. He could raise and arm troops from among the town populations. Gunpowder therefore made the bourgeois the equal of the nobleman and was a weapon in his hands to be used in the overthrow of the feudal order and the erection of the capitalist.

But democracy, in the sense of representative government, *i.e.* bourgeois democracy as it exists today, had made itself felt even earlier: in England in the struggle of the nobles against the autocratic monarchy; on the Continent in the struggle of the bourgeois cities against the feudal lords. Monarchy represented the crystallization of a national state, that is of a national ruling class, which not only pacified the warring nobles and landowners, but also protected the commercial classes from them. A unified "national" army also came into existence, which could not be anything else but infantry. It requires considerable stretching of the material to see monarchy as merely the translation in society of the idea of a single military leader in warfare.

In modern times, McKinley sees the years just preceding the World War as the ideal ones for democracy because they were the ideal years for infantry. Still it cannot be overlooked that more than half the world was under autocratic rule, and there was scant difference in military organization between the democracies and the autocracies. Because the World War

was fought on this basis (infantry) democracy conquered and the entire world became "safe for democracy" (this phrase, without the quotation marks, is the heading of the penultimate chapter in the book). Since then democracy has been declining because the "democratic" weapons (the three-inch gun and the light machine gun, rifles and hand grenades, trenches and barbed wire entanglements are mentioned by the author specifically) are giving way to tanks, airplanes and gas, making possible the domination of the many by the technically trained few, "for the use of the new weapons is not simple and cannot be learned properly without long and expensive training. Moreover the engines themselves are costly; the wielding of such means to power will necessarily lie in the hands of those who possess the wealth of the world." Thus fascism comes into power with the rise of the mighty engines of warfare, for "all of this would naturally lead to the concentration of power in the hands of a small group of determined men." While the author also discusses the shortcomings of and defenses against the new engines of warfare, he definitely agrees with the opinion that they make large armies less necessary. But in the two years since the book was published armies have grown constantly larger, and precisely the dictatorial countries have resorted to the militarizing of the entire population. This process is unexplainable from McKinley's theory of fascism, but the explanation and estimate of fascism which practically all Marxists hold in common foresees such national militarization. McKinley's fear that democracy is doomed unless counter-developments restore military power to the common people as an infantry would be gloomy indeed if there were no alternative in the form of the possibility of the common people of today—the working class—capturing and using the weapons which have eliminated the power of infantry. That this is not an impossible task was demonstrated in the post-war developments in Europe. For while the technical-military machine was not quite what it is today, the disparity between it and the worker was great enough. But the worker could put it to his own uses if he could establish proper relations with the attendant of the machine.

This seemingly harsh criticism of McKinley's book is not really so harsh as it appears. The intention is to reverse the approach, the relation between cause and effect, to place military developments in their proper place in the entire fabric of social development. This done, the book assumes new significance. The contribution of McKinley is really major. Perhaps it is this distortion of relations between social and social-technical developments which led him to the error common to most bourgeois writers—the error of considering social questions in the abstract and to indulge in meaningless talk about "democracy" in the abstract.

McKinley has exaggerated the influence of military forms upon social relations, yet has made perfectly clear the relation between military power and political power. Everywhere and at all times a ruling group has depended, not on its persuasive powers or on the justice of its cause, but in the last analysis on its physical, *i.e.* military power. And only too often has military power been able to overcome the obstacle of lack of popular support. Conversely an oppressed class to rise to power, to throw off its oppressor, had to learn to develop its military power and use it for its own emancipation. Democracy, in the sense of the elimination of all exploitation, has a future, because the working class has not lost its ability to "put down by physical force the encroachment of an individual or class greedy for power."

HERBERT ZAM

American Trade Unionism

HISTORY OF LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES 1896-1932. Volume III, "Working Conditions and Labor Legislation," *by Don D. Lescohier and Elizabeth Brandeis;* volume IV, "Labor Movements," *by Selig Perlman and Philip Taft.* New York, Macmillan Company, 1935; 778 and 683 pages and $4.50 and $4.00 respectively.

THE works under review here bring the two volumes of the *History of Labour in the United States,* by John R. Commons and Associates, down to date. The earlier volumes broke virgin soil whereas the field covered by the present books has been well worked by many hands. For this reason alone it is doubtful whether the Perlman-Taft and Lescohier-Brandeis books will take a place equal in importance to that occupied by the older work. Volume III comprises two divisions, really two books: Working Conditions, by Don D. Lescohier and Labor Legislation, by Elizabeth Brandeis. Volume IV by Selig Perlman and Philip Taft is devoted to Labor Movements. It was possible in Volumes I and II, the authors point out, to make the discussion of working conditions and labor legislation "merely incidental to the study of labor movements," but the greater fullness and complexity of the newer material prompted the adoption of the present arrangement.

Volume III is a compendium of important factual information set down with what seems to have been a deliberate attempt to avoid critical analysis. The Perlman-Taft volume pays similar deference to the cult of academic objectivity by attempting to isolate interpretation in an introductory and a concluding chapter, leaving the body of the book for objective presenta-

tion of facts. Inevitably, however, the authors' point of view, the Commons-Wisconsin school's pragmatic theory of the labor movement, pervades every chapter. This school regards the labor movement as an experimental process of building unions and adapting their policy to "environment." Since the Gompers leadership was the supreme demonstration of this policy this book becomes in effect an apologia of Gompersism.

The American Federation of Labor under the leadership of Samuel Gompers recognized the peculiarities of the American environment and molded its policy accordingly. It recognized first of all that this environment had prevented the American worker from becoming class conscious. He lived in a new country of untold wealth, a land of universal manhood suffrage and deep-dyed social equalitarianism, a land in which the possibility of almost universal opportunity to amass riches and win economic independence had just ceased to be a reality. The American workers also lived in an environment in which the quest for riches, the dominant motive in the nation's life, was pursued with an unrestrained relentlessness which the disappearance of the frontier had not diminished and which big business took over from the earlier era. It was an environment in which the tradition of class mobility was very much alive even though the fact had disappeared.

All this tended not only to weaken the class consciousness of the workers but also to stiffen the resistance of the employers to the efforts of the trade unions to challenge their claims to absolute rights over their property. The Gompers unions countered the employer claim with the claim to a property right in the job. Thus, whereas class consciousness served as the unifying principle of the labor movements of Europe, "job consciousness" took its place for the labor movement of America. The Gompers leadership believed that the solidarity of American trade unionists was directly proportional to the closeness with which the union revolved about the individual worker's job. "They knew," declare the authors, "that where wage-earners were held together by the feeling that their jobs came out of a common reservoir, as did those in the same or closely related crafts, their fighting solidarity left nothing to be desired. They also knew that they had to go slow in pressing on to greater solidarity. Where conditions made cooperation between different craft groups urgent, it was obtained through free cooperation, each union reserving the right to decide for itself in every situation whether to cooperate or not. . . . Solidarity of the skilled and unskilled was not precluded, but it was never assumed as a matter of moral duty. . . . Solidarity . . . was thus a solidarity with a quickly diminishing potency as one passed from the craft group—which looks upon the jobs in the craft as its common property for which it is ready to fight long

and bitterly—to the widening concentric circles of the related crafts, the industry, the American Federation of Labor, and the world labor movement."

The authors place great emphasis on the heterogeneous character of the American wage-earning group as one of the factors which has weakened its solidarity. "With a working class of such composition," they declare, "to have made socialism or communism the official 'ism' of the movement, would have meant, even if other conditions permitted it, deliberately driving away many of the Catholics, with whom an irreconcilable opposition to socialism is a matter of religious principle. Consequently the only acceptable 'consciousness' for American labor as a whole has been a 'job consciousness,' with a limited objective of wage and job control; which has not at all hindered American unionism from being the most hard hitting unionism in any country."

This paragraph underscores some of the most glaring omissions of these books for nowhere do they deal adequately with the role of the immigrant and the Negro, or the tremendous influence of the Catholic Church in the labor movement. In fact the stupid and frequently disastrous policy of Negro exclusion pursued by many of the Federation's most important unions is passed over with what amounts almost to justification: "On the race problem within the nation the Federation's stand has always been liberal. It insisted that International unions must not debar Negroes by specific regulations in their constitutions. However, admission to membership is voted by locals, and the Federation's good intentions have to be strained through the International and local concerned." This represents the very quintessence of academic objectivity, to say nothing of academic ignorance of an important section of the professorial subject.

But after all, these sentences (the reference here is not to the lack of knowledge demonstrated) are typical of the authors' attitude to the whole Gompers A. F. of L. policy. It is the method of stating objectively with approval. For example, the American wage-earning class is a minority, therefore the A. F. of L. has followed a non-partisan political policy, which presumably is wise. "The attitude toward the unskilled and unorganized has differed from union to union. . . . The picture of self-centered craft unions, callous to the plight of the helpless groups is greatly overdrawn and based on extreme instances." Such "extreme instances" as the failure to organize the Negro, the steel strike of 1919, the post-war packing-house strikes.

This book was completed before the rise of the Committee for Industrial Organization and even before the historic Lewis-Hutcheson punch at the 1935 A. F. of L. convention. But even had the authors seen that punch,

they would doubtless still have been persuaded by their faith in the soundness of A. F. of L. policy that even an irreconcilable conflict could be solved by A. F. of L. methods. The issue of craft vs. industrial unionism does, they admit, offer serious difficulty. Thus they say: "Industrial unionism, the only form possible in mass production industry, it is evident, will come, certainly not through a cutting up of existing craft unions and probably not by the latter relinquishing outright their mere theoretical (because unexercised) jurisdictions in these industries in favor of the American Federation of Labor. . . ." It must indeed have been a rude jolt to these authors when the craft unions "callous to the plight of helpless groups" only in "extreme cases" illegally threw out of the A. F. of L. more than a million of their fellow workers attempting to organize the unorganized in unions of "the only form possible" for them.

Recent events not only indicate that the authors miscalculated regarding industrial unionism, but they also show their analysis was inadequate with regard to independent political action. "The non-partisan political policy of Gompers still stands unchallenged," they declare. "The effect of the New Deal will probably strengthen [the] tradition." These words were written before the so-called Non-Partisan Labor Committee, which, despite its support of Roosevelt, spelled the beginning of that tradition's end.

In a final justification of their experimental approach the authors discuss the errors of the Marxist theory of the labor movement. They say: "The Marxian theory of the labor movement builds too much on theoretically and statistically demonstrable economic trends, confident that mass movements are in the last analysis controlled by those forces. It is part and parcel of the more general Marxian theory of social institutions, political, legal, ecclesiastical and so forth. But the Marxian theory of institutions was, after all, the product of an observation of their development from feudalism to laissez-faire, in other words, for a period of history in which the dominant institutional trend was from the control of the individual to his emancipation from such control. The dynamic factor in this development was the capitalist entrepreneur whose job it was to demolish the obstacles that stood in the way of his development of market and production to the end of greater profits. As the process was a negative one, to remove obstacles, the end product tended to be the same in all the countries subject to its operation. Hence the conclusion that social science, Marxism, could forecast the future institutional 'superstructure' from a study of the economic base."

The misstatements in this passage speak so loudly for themselves that it would be superfluous to underscore and attempt to answer them. But it

would be interesting to learn how, if mass movements are not in the last analysis controlled by economic forces, the authors account for the existence of the labor movement.

The greatest shortcoming of this work as a history of American labor is that it does not deal with the labor movement in its larger economic and social setting. The condition of labor is determined by forces beyond the control of the organized labor movement. The economic development of an area, the state of business not only in a given country but throughout the world, technological advances, the credit situation, competitive conditions in particular and related industries are among the factors that determine the course the organized labor movement must take, that stimulate its demands and limit the extent of its achievements. Labor unions may force wages up but the necessity for private industry to operate at a profit under influence of the factors named place limits on the height to which wages can rise. Trade unionism is, of course, in itself an economic factor which influences the business situation, but even if the workers in all of industry were completely unionized, the unions could still do no more than cushion the impact of the economic forces of the capitalist system upon the workers.

The organized labor movement must recognize these conditions in determining its policies. It must operate so as to get all it can today within limits of the system under which it functions, which implies some identity of immediate interest between workers and employers who control the jobs. But the problem does not stop there for the labor movement must recognize the fundamental undesirability of this very situation. Whatever the degree of common interest between workers and employers in their day to day affairs there is only divergence of interest in their fundamental relationship.

STERLING D. SPERO

Religion and Revolution

CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION, *edited by John Lewis, Karl Polanyi and Donald K. Kitchin.* New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936; 526 pages; $3.00.

WITHOUT doubt one of the least adequately developed fields of Marxist thought has been that dealing with the relation between Marxism and religion. To this particular subject the symposium *Christianity and the Social Revolution* makes a significant and stimulating addition, though more by raising questions than by definitively answering them. There are

nineteen contributions to this volume, the bulk of them being by bourgeois scholars or clergymen of British nationality. The Continent, however, has two representatives, Soviet Russia two, and America one. Prominent among the contributors are Professor Joseph Needham, eminent biologist of Cambridge University, Professor John Macmurray of London University, Father Conrad Noel, leader of left-wing Anglo-Catholicism, Professor Julius Hecker of Moscow University, and Professor Reinhold Niebuhr of Union Theological Seminary.

The book, as one of the editors puts it, "challenges the traditional attitude of Christianity towards the question of social change. It also challenges the orthodox attitude of communism to religion." Part I, entitled "Socialism in Historical Christianity," reinterprets the life and teaching of Jesus and the history of the Christian Church. It includes excellent essays on the history of Christian Socialism, on communism during the Middle Ages and Reformation, and on the Levellers who formed the left or "socialist" wing of the Cromwellian revolution. Part II on "Communism and Religion" concentrates on presenting the orthodox Marxist view towards Christianity. Part III, "Dies Irae," tries to look into the future, shows that the real enemy of Christianity is fascism rather than socialism, and ends with an attempted synthesis of Christianity and Communism by Professor Macmurray.

Of paramount importance, in my opinion, is the reinforcement which this volume gives to the point that just as in the realm of economics and politics the competent Marxist takes into consideration the different conditions in each country, so he must do in the field of religion. Specifically, the religious situation in Russia both before and after the Communist Revolution, though throwing much light on religion everywhere else, cannot be the sole and sufficient guide for radicals in other nations, particularly in England and America. The intellectual and moral backwardness of the Greek Orthodox Church, its intimate and official tie-up with the Tsarist Government, and several other factors made inevitable an absolute antagonism between it and the revolutionary movement. Today in Spain, for quite similar reasons, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the radicals is somewhat the same.

There is very, very little in the Russian experience, though increasingly more in the Spanish, which could make intelligible the spectacle, to be seen in America and England at the present time, of church officials and professors of theology entering into united front movements of the left on a noticeable scale. Probably no body of professionals in the United States has amongst it proportionately more radicals than the clergy. As regards England the very volume under discussion testifies to something

of the same tendency. On the Continent, while there has been a long tradition of hostility between radicals and the Church, the threat and actuality of fascism in recent years have altered the situation to a considerable degree. Today in Germany even Catholics, including priests, cooperate with socialists and communists against the Nazis.

The essential fact is, I think, as *Christianity and the Social Revolution* brings out clearly, that no matter how much the metaphysical naturalism and atheism of Marxism is opposed to the supernaturalism of Christianity, more and more Christians are beginning to understand that many of their highest ethical ideals can be realized only through the coming of socialism. Recognition of the inherent worth of the individual, the spiritual development of the community, the brotherhood of man, the kingdom of God on earth—these can be attained only in a socialist society. The golden rule can be established only when the rule of gold—as typified in the heartless profit system—is forever broken. Of course Christianity taken as a whole by no means presents a consistent ethical viewpoint, especially when one considers its practice; but there is sufficient evidence in Christian authority and history to give the radicals in the Church fairly firm support in their interpretation.

If Christianity and Marxism can agree on certain ethical aims, then this indicates plainly that the metaphysics of neither system is univocally deducible from its ethical or economic programs. It is not possible, as is sometimes vulgarly supposed, to deduce atheism from the Marxist theory of surplus value or theism from the Christian theory of the brotherhood of man. There is no necessary *logical* connection between believing in a planned socialist society and believing in atheism; nor between believing in the capitalist system and believing in God. Marxism must mean, therefore, that there is a certain *socio-psychological* connection.

Several times, however, it is suggested in this symposium that even such a psychological connection is not a *necessary* one. An exploited and disheartened worker under the capitalist system *may* be impelled thereby to believe in God and immortality, which then *may* become his opiates. But what about the rising and far from disheartened bourgeoisie, which apparently found Christian supernaturalism a decided stimulant? And if a capitalist-hating God were concocted who was at heart a permanent revolutionary and communist, promising beyond death a beautiful socialist paradise to all good comrades, why could not belief in him and his heaven be a real help and inspiration to the proletariat? Or at least to that section of the proletariat which still likes to indulge in some form of religion? On the other hand, can we not conceive of a hard-boiled atheistic capitalism which felt that properly controlled movies, tabloids and radio stations

constituted a much more effective opiate for the masses than religion could ever be?

The contributors to this book suggest a great many interesting questions of this kind—questions which some Marxists may consider distinctly perverse. There is no doubt that an intelligent treatment by Marxism of such issues, without compromising its own principles, will result in winning more and more members of the Christian Church to work on behalf of socialism and against fascism. Yet even if, as Professor Hecker rather pessimistically claims, the twentieth-century Christians represented in this volume remain "only voices crying in the wilderness," it would be well worth while for Marxists to give them intellectual attention and practical cooperation.

CORLISS LAMONT

Veblen and Marxism

WHAT VEBLEN TAUGHT, *Selected Writings of Thorstein Veblen, Edited With an Introduction by Wesley C. Mitchell.* New York, Viking Press, 1936; 503 pages; $3.00.

THE fourteen selections in this book offer a compact and stimulating introduction to the writings of Thorstein Veblen, incomparably the greatest American thinker in the social sciences. They cover most of his books and some of his essays, including the devastating essay on "The Limitations of Marginal Utility."[1] It appears clearly, if incompletely, from

1 The theory of marginal utility, now a wistful ghost in the halls of higher learning, was greeted upon its appearance as the final, crushing answer to the Marxist analysis of capitalist production. It is interesting to recall what Veblen wrote about the theory in 1909, *What Veblen Taught,* p. 52: Marginal utility seeks "to turn a postulate of distribution to account for a theory of production . . . which throws the whole excursion back into the field of distribution. . . . Marginal utility theory is of a wholly statical character. It offers no theory of a movement of any kind, being occupied with the adjustment of values to a given situation, [and contributes nothing] at all appreciable to a theory of genesis, growth, sequence, change, process, or the like, in economic life. . . . It is characteristic of the school that wherever an element of the cultural fabric, an institution or an institutional phenomena, is involved in the facts with which the theory is occupied, such institutional facts are taken for granted, denied or explained away. . . . Money and the habitual resort to its use are conceived to be simply the ways and means by which consumable goods are acquired, and therefore simply a convenient method by which to procure the pleasurable sensations of consumption, other bearings of the case being disregarded. . . . But such is not the run of facts in modern business. Valuations of capitalization, *e.g.,* occur without its being practicable to refer them to visibly equivalent variations either in the state of the industrial arts or in the sensations of consumption. Credit extensions tend to inflation of credit, rising prices, overstocking of markets, etc., likewise without any visible or securely traceable correlation in the state of the industrial arts or in the pleasures of consumption. . . . Hence the run of facts must be thrown out of the theoretical formulation. . . . So that the whole 'money economy,' with all its machinery of credit and the rest, disappears in a tissue of metaphors to reappear theoretically expurgated, sterilized and simplified into a 'refined system of barter,'

the selections how destructive a critic of capitalism Veblen was. The criticism inexorably unmasks the apologetics of capitalist economics by undermining their preconceptions, recurs again and again to the disastrous antagonism between industry and business, damningly analyzes the social relations that degrade the sense of workmanship, and makes the prophecy that the system of business enterprise, or capitalism, must inevitably decay. Nor is it all destructive criticism, for the emphasis on workmanship offers elements of a new cultural synthesis. One misses, however, selections from *The Higher Learning in America* and *The Vested Interests and the Common Man;* one misses especially the two sympathetic essays, written in 1919 and 1921, on the Russian Revolution and Bolshevism, which reveal in Veblen the beginnings of a practical revolutionary approach to the problem of social reconstruction. Nevertheless the Mitchell selections, together with Dorfman's excellent biography,[2] offer a good preliminary introduction.

There is need, however, for a Marxist selection and editing of the writings of Veblen, who more than any other American thinker offers material and ideas of the utmost significance to Marxism. Yet Veblen was not an "American Marx." His ideas are not, as a pre-war socialist (now of the most reactionary persuasion) tried to prove, the basis of an "American socialism," nor is it true, as one liberal claims, that "Veblenism may be to intellectuals of the future what Marxism has been to the humanitarians of the past." But neither are Veblen's ideas, as one communist argues, "garbled Marxism" and "premonitions of fascist strategy." The confusion makes a Marxist selection and evaluation all the more necessary.

Veblen is not, of course, directly responsible for vulgarizations of his ideas by those who claim him, but there are elements in them that lend themselves to vulgarization. The Technocrats distorted his conception of social change and forgot his observation that the "technicians must be backed by the aggressive support of the trained working force engaged in transportation and the great primary industries," yet Veblen did speculate, wrongly, on the technicians being a peculiarly revolutionary force. Others speak in mystic fashion of the "technological imperative" and have faith

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culminating in a net aggregate maximum of pleasurable sensations of consumption. . . . The cultural elements so tacitly postulated as immutable conditions precedent to economic life are ownership and free contract, together with such other features of the scheme of natural rights as are implied in the exercise of these. These cultural products are, for the purpose of the theory, conceived to be given *a priori* in unmitigated force. They are part of the nature of things; so there is no need of accounting for them or inquiring into them, as to how they have come to be such as they are, or how and why they have changed and are changing, or what effect all this may have on the relations of men who live by or under this cultural situation. . . . The acceptance by the economists of these or other institutional elements as given and immutable limits their inquiry in a particular and decisive way. It shuts off the inquiry at the point where the modern scientific interest sets in."

2 Joseph Dorfman, *Thorstein Veblen and His America* (New York 1934).

in "consumers" and "the public," not in the "classes employed in the industrial occupations," yet Veblen overemphasized the technological factor and never clearly analyzed the class-economic elements of social change. Nor is Veblen responsible for the shortcomings of institutional economics, which claims him and is influenced by him, but which, despite its constructive aspects, is an incomplete application of his ideas. Veblen himself in 1925 stigmatized institutional economics as "a science of business traffic, monographic, detailed, exacting, and imbued with a spirit of devotion to *things as they are shaping themselves* under the paramount exigencies of absentee ownership as a working system; and the personnel of this science should be partisans of this system." The final proof of this sardonic appraisal appears in the persons of the institutional economists who rallied to the New Deal to make more workable the system of business enterprise that Veblen condemned: to plan the systematic limitation of economic output—a formerly relative necessity of capitalism now become absolute—that Veblen denounced as "business sabotage" and the "conscientious withdrawal of efficiency." Yet Veblen, while destroying the preconceptions of accepted economic theory, developed no theory of his own; his analysis of institutional changes and mutations lends itself to the belief that one may tinker with institutions pragmatically, for there is no theory to guide action.

Veblen claimed that Marxism was "unscientific," "romantic" and an expression of "natural rights." But his one proof of the latter charge was wrong, for Marx never urged the "natural right" of labor to its "full product." And Marx was "unscientific" to Veblen because the American scholar limited science to the "objective" study of cause and effect. But science is not interested simply in why natural forces act in a particular fashion, but in utilizing and organizing those forces to serve man: the technological application of science. If the aims of the natural sciences are practical and purposive, how much truer that is (or should be) of the social sciences! Veblen's approach limited him to a study of the cause and effect of institutional changes. Marx was interested in something more practical and purposive, hence more scientific: an understanding of changes to organize and direct them toward conscious and definite ends: a *social* expression of the technological application of science, or social engineering. Marx had a truer conception of science than Veblen.

Marxism was necessarily unscientific and romantic to Veblen because he transferred to the field of history and society the naturalistic determinism of Darwinism, "a scheme of blindly cumulative causation," to use his own words, "essentially mechanical." This was social Darwinism of the most rigorous kind. (It is suggestive of Veblen's profoundly rebel nature that social Darwinism, which others erected into a repulsive system of

capitalist apologetics, became in his hands the means for the most destructive social criticism by any American scholar.) But the mechanical materialism of Darwinism was transformed by later scientific progress, while the dialectical materialism of Marx, who transcended the limitations of Darwinism, acquires constantly new scope and significance, for it is an expression of reality and a means for the mastery of reality. Unlike Marx, Veblen neglected the factors of consciousness and purposive struggle in human history, despite his emphasis on the psychological approach to the study of culture. In the light of the mechanics of the naturalistic determinism of Darwinism, Veblen criticised the dynamics of the social determinism of Marxism because they "make the movement of social progress move on the spiritual plane of human desire and passion and not on the (literally) material plane of mechanical and physiological stress. . . . It is a sublimated materialism, sublimated by the dominating presence of the conscious human spirit." That criticism ignores the dynamics of history, which involve the reciprocal action of structure and superstructure, of consciousness and its underlying material elements, of practice and theory. Veblen's mechanical materialism, applying to history the limited Darwinian evolutionary concepts of variation, selection and survival, makes social change a mere "drift of habituation" to new conditions; but this, despite its element of truth, cannot explain how man, habituated to the old order, may avoid habituation to a declining civilization and revolt to create the new. Veblen was partly entangled in the conception of an "immutably given human nature" with a measurably fixed determining biological endowment, while Marx recognized that as labor changes the outer world *man changes his own nature.*

Veblen's final proof that Marxism was unscientific was the triumphant argument that the revisionist socialists were "amending" Marxism "to bring it into consonance with the current scientific point of view." But the amending was unscientific, for it meant smuggling into Marxism the elements of social Darwinism. The revisionists, and most of their "orthodox" opponents, replaced dialectical materialism with a mechanical "scientific" conception of social progress, resembling naturalistic determinism, that rejected the purposive revolutionary aspects of Marxism. This expressed and justified, particularly in Germany, a reformist "habituation" to institutional changes in capitalism which was considered a "growing into" socialism, but actually represented a "growing into" imperialist state capitalism. Abandonment of the dynamics of Marxism, of the purposive revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism, led to catastrophe. Veblen himself pointed out in 1921 that the reformist socialists, who depended upon the "obsolescence" of capitalist ownership "by force of natural law [good mechanical materialism, that!] have now come to an exasperated realization that

Bolshevism is putting that orthodox preconception out of joint."[3]

The limitations of Veblen's approach prevented consistent and predictive analysis of the underlying forces of social development. He foresaw "the natural decay of business enterprise," but the prophecy does not necessarily arise out of his fundamental postulates nor is it accompanied by the projection of a new social order—as in the case of Marx. Technology is only one factor and it is conditioned by more decisive social relations. Veblen is brilliant in his exploration of the conflict between the pecuniary and the technical, business and industry; but the conflict has always characterized capitalist enterprise, and the exploration does not explain why the conflict was formerly compatible with the upswing of capitalism and is now accompanied by decline; both stages are logically explained by the Marxist theory of capital accumulation. The penetrating study of absentee ownership does not implement its significance as a new stage of capitalism, monopoly capitalism, and an objective transition to socialism. The concept of vested interests has real value, but Veblen does not recognize its limitations in terms of the more decisive class interests and class struggle.

All of which cannot adequately serve the ends of a program of action. Veblen turned from mere social criticism to practical consideration of social reconstruction under impact of disillusion with "the war to make the world safe for democracy" (which he accepted, although he indulged in none of the obscene hysterics of the academic war-mongers) and the influence of the Russian Revolution. But he had to explore ideas and movements outside the range of his own philosophy—the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.), Bolshevism, a *"Soviet"* of technicians. Veblen sympathized with Bolshevism, which he characterized as "a menace to the vested interests, and to nothing and no one else," foresaw a revolutionary movement of "the underlying population under something like the Red Flag," and insisted that it is necessary to "disallow" and "cancel"—*i.e.* expropriate—all the rights of capitalist ownership. According to Dorfman, Veblen was bitterly disappointed by the ebb in the world revolutionary tide after 1920; six months before his death in 1929 the old rebel said: "Just now communism offers the best course that I can see."

Yet, conceding all limitations, there is an astonishing series of analyses and ideas in Veblen's writings that are of permanent value. The criticism of accepted economic theory and the sociological broadening of the scope of economics is in essential accord with Marxism. At least as important is Veblen's analysis of the corporate and financial superstructure of modern capitalism, whose significance Marxism has largely neglected: that

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3 Thorstein Veblen, "Between Bolshevism and War," *The Freeman*, May 25, 1921; reprinted in his *Essays in Our Changing Order* (New York 1934), p. 442.

superstructure is increasingly important in the movement of cyclical crises and in the general crisis of capitalism.

But it is in cultural, superstructural analysis that Veblen is most suggestive and vital. Largely neglected by Marxism, such analysis, in addition to its necessity for the understanding of reciprocal social action, is indispensable to the creation of socialist culture. No one has as clearly and damningly revealed the "color" of capitalist culture, no one has contributed more to a new cultural synthesis.

Veblen's penetrating discussion of technology broadens into an emphasis on its cultural aspects. For the impact of technology is not wholly economic, nor is its cultural influence always indirect. Consider one of Veblen's many illuminating comments: "The cultural growth dominated by the machine industry is of a skeptical, matter-of-fact complexion, materialistic, unmoral, unpatriotic, undevout," although "there has enough of the ancient norms of western Christendom remained intact to make a very respectable protest." The value of Veblen's analysis is not destroyed by the fact that he is unaware of the pressure capitalist production exerts, through the fetishism of commodities, on the recreation of irrationalism.

Again and again Veblen recurs to his analysis of the sense of workmanship, which he considers makes man the lord of creation; to the antagonism between workmanship and the social relations that limit, exploit and degrade it. This is a subject curiously neglected by Marxists. Veblen's brilliant study of workmanship is his most enduring monument.

Two final aspects of Veblen's significance. While class interests are dominant, there *are* minor interests. The concept of vested interests is a fruitful approach to many problems, among them the problem of antagonisms within the working class and the labor movement. While socialism abolishes classes, a large number of varying interests will exist for years to come; their recognition and free play are a social and cultural necessity. Still more important to socialist construction, perhaps, is Veblen's analysis of the cultural traits of the leisure class. Lenin considered bureaucracy a major problem of socialist construction; it is more or less dominant, according to the economic and cultural heritage, in the earlier stages of socialism. The tendency is for a bureaucracy and its allies, including the socialist variety, to acquire vested interests and the general cultural traits of a "leisure" class—*e.g.* invidious distinctions and conspicuous consumption. Veblen may be of the utmost value in the struggle against the reversionary aspects of socialist bureaucracy, a struggle that involves the "withering away" of the state. There is no wholly direct or mechanical connection between socialization of industry and a particular new cultural expression, which may retain many objectionable reactionary features because of cultu-

ral lag and other factors. Socialist culture depends upon freely creative understanding and action.

All that is vital in Thorstein Veblen may fulfill itself in Marxism and socialism. LEWIS COREY

The New Era in a Novel

THE BIG MONEY, *by John Dos Passos*. New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936; 561 pages; $2.50.

IN HIS new novel John Dos Passos has given us in the novel form what amounts to a Marxist treatment of a most strange and tragic period of American history—the period which has come to be known as "The New Era." This period, it now seems clear, was the Indian Summer of American capitalism; the summer that was to last forever, and make everybody rich, simply by extending and reinforcing the traditional American pattern of anarchic acquisition. From base to superstructure the whole society was dealing in futures at the very moment when the cold logic of the Marxist analysis was writing "finis" to this phase of the American adventure.

Dos Passos lived through this period with his eyes open, enough theory in his head to serve his purposes—quite evidently he has read and understood Veblen, especially the *Theory of Business Enterprise,* better than the early Technocrats—and no disposition to hand over the province of his art to literary and political kibitzers. The result is that this last book, continuing the series which started with *42nd Parallel* and *1919,* is better as art, better as a social document, even better as propaganda than anything written to date to the frail formulae of "revolutionary art," "proletarian literature," etc.

Too often weak writers and pretentious writers use new or quasi-new technical devices to substitute for their failure to grapple effectively with their essential artistic problem. Dos Passos is not in this category. Even in the earlier and much inferior books it was apparent that he was after something serious. Any form or combination of forms is good if it serves a clear and important purpose, and in *The Big Money* Dos Passos has for the first time rather completely justified his technical experimentalism. Everything that he did less well or badly in previous books is done competently, in some respects brilliantly, in this one. The characters are still described and photographed from all angles rather than created, but the description is so acute and intelligent that the net effect is surprisingly satisfying.

The characters are all gamblers and they all lose—the game is stacked against them, and not by the author. Charley Anderson throws his prestige as a war aviator and his integrity as a mechanic-inventor into the pot as the primary asset of a racketeering promotion in commercial aviation. He comes out a ruined, drunken hysteric. Margo Dowling, the proletarian orphan, throws her sex and her doll face into the pot and comes out an unsexed movie star already moving into decline. Ben Compton, the left wing labor organizer, gives all to the movement, including his relationship to Mary French—she has an abortion instead of a baby—and is ultimately ditched by the movement.

Dos Passos is no sentimentalist and he doesn't blunt the edge of the ironic fact that Mary, who plays it straight as a woman and as the working and sleeping comrade of her radical men, is in the end frustrated and ditched as a woman. But Eveline Hutchins Johnson, who plays sex and society crooked, is also ditched. And Richard Ellsworth Savage, the public relations racketeer, who also plays it crooked, winds up unable to bear his own smell.

For the first time, in *The Big Money,* the "Camera Eye"—a device for introducing the emotional ingredient of lyric and dramatic poetry into this ingenious amalgam—is for the most part effectively used. Dos Passos is a better poet than Eugene O'Neill or Theodore Dreiser, and has a more agile and resourceful mind. It is, I think, this quality of sheer intelligence, plus a genial disregard of esthetic and political back-seat drivers, that has enabled Dos Passos to move steadily toward a highly creditable and significant maturity.

The attitude is detached, satiric, to a degree pessimistic. The technique, on the whole, is photographically descriptive rather than creatively evocative. *The Big Money* is a collective novel without a collective hero; its protagonist is the get-rich-quick psychosis of the New Era. Of the characters in the book, those who strive for money and those who struggle to bring truth and beauty into human relations are almost equally frustrated and destroyed; it would seem that practically all the characters in the book breathed moral, physical and spiritual sickness and death from the very air of that period of American life. Dos Passos, of course, is on the side of truth and beauty, but that is the way the New Era looked to him, and indeed, that is pretty much the way it was.

But since then we have moved out of the New Era, through the depression, and into a period of deepening domestic struggle, sharpened by the current preludes to general war and revolution. I suspect that for his next book Dos Passos will need a hero, a collective hero rather than a collective psychosis. He could and did describe the New Era psychosis excellently,

but he couldn't get inside it, perhaps because both as ex-Harvard esthete and as social and political radical he hated and despised it too much.

The changing mood of the world, the growing tension of struggle will demand and get an effective response from the conscious, advancing artist; his emotional participation in the struggle will tend to push aside his preoccupation with the clinical analysis of capitalist decline. The creative personality will integrate itself in the process of this participation, while style and technique will tend to reflect this integration.

At least something like that *should* happen, and in the case of Dos Passos one is confident that something like that *will* happen.

JAMES RORTY

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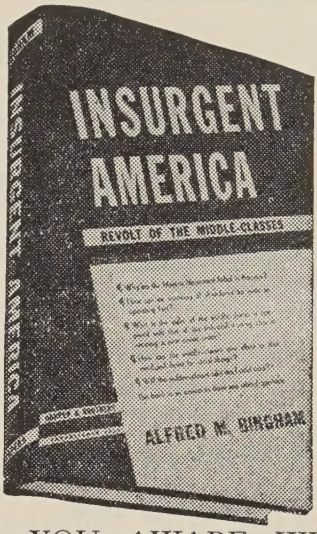

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